



—网游之—

VIRTUAL WORLD: CLOSE COMBAT MAGE

BOOK 04

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Virtual World: Close Combat Mage

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Synopsis

Due to a mistake on his student's part, a super Martial Artist had received a wrong class in an online game and had become a mage. He who was used to curbing violence with violence and using strength to subdue strength could only make the best out of his mistake. Taking on a new lease in life, he became a violent close combat mage. When strength and magic came perfectly together, a new gaming path had been opened by him!

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 301 - Act of Burglary

Gu Fei quickly brought the five men near Mr. Adrian's mansion. When they got close it, they spotted a familiar figure by the backyard.

"Xiaoyu!" Gu Fei shouted.

June's Rain turned around and saw Gu Fei and company and she started waving at them wildly, "Over here!"

The men came over and surrounded the lady, asking, "What are you doing here?"

Gu Fei spied the cellar doors underneath June's Rain feet and chuckled, "You haven't given up yet, huh?"

June's Rain stomped on the cellar door with both her feet. "It's very strange. They're clearly not locked, so why can't I open them?"

As five men began inspecting the cellar doors, Gu Fei stood by the side and laughed, "It's a game. If the system wants the cellar doors to remain locked, no one can of course open them. What other reasons could there be?" He could hardly believe his eyes that the five men had sunk to June's Rain's level of intelligence.

Unexpectedly, Brother Assist turned to address Gu Fei seriously, "You're wrong. The detail that went into creating Parallel World is really sophisticated. If there's a door that cannot be opened, a reason must surely exist behind it." With that, the five men continued examining the double doors.

"Could it be because they are too heavy?" Royal God Call tugged on the doors as he said this.

"Let me give it a shot." War Without Wounds stood up, and June's Rain gazed at him expectantly. Gu Fei was speechless. June's Rain was an all-Strength build Warrior. Given how War Without Wounds was a veteran Warrior, so he would certainly not

adopt such an extreme stat point distribution; therefore, despite his thick-set figure, his Strength might not even be on par with June's Rain's. If she could not pull the doors open, why would he be able to?

Just as Gu Fei had expected, War Without Wounds used all his Strength to tug at the cellar doors for the longest time before concluding, "They're not heavy; they just can't be opened."

"Tsk!" Gu Fei scoffed audibly.

Brother Assist closely inspected the gap between the door and its frame, as well as the hinges but found nothing unusual. Finally, he mumbled, "Could magic be in play here, preventing these doors from being opened with force and requiring people to use a special method or item to open them?"

"Mr. Adrian is indeed special!" They all trembled in excitement and looked at the NPC's mansion with glistening eyes.

"Mr. Adrian is currently not at home," June's Rain supplied.

"Oh!" Gu Fei exclaimed, saying, "No wonder you dared rummage through his things in the backyard."

"He he! It's been quite some time..." June's Rain boasted.

"This is our chance!" Royal God Call slapped his thigh, saying, "Mr. Adrian is not at home. Let's search inside his mansion; perhaps, we can find a scroll or something that can open these cellar doors!"

"Let's!" War Without Wounds was already walking toward Mr. Adrian's mansion.

"Hey..." Gu Fei reminded them, "Did we come here to look for Mr. Adrian or open these cellar doors?"

This was when the excited pair slapped their foreheads, "Oh, yeah!" They then turned to ask June's Rain, "Ahem... Do you happen to know where Mr. Adrian is?"

June's Rain shook her head, albeit it seemed that Royal God Call's previous words had given her an epiphany. She was here to open these cellar doors! Young Master Han spoke up as she left to break in to the mansion and rummage through it, "I know where Mr. Adrian is."

"How do you know?" "Where?" Everyone turned to look at him.

Young Master Han tapped one of the cellar doors with his foot.

"What's that for?"

Just as this question was asked, the cellar doors creaked open. Everyone leaped back in surprise as a man holding a lantern emerged from the cellar; he used his free hand to support his weight by propping it against the ground.

Young Master Han was now looking at the other five men, "If the door can't be opened when it's not locked, the most likely explanation is that someone has locked it from within...."

They all lowered their heads in embarrassment, especially Brother Assist. All that explanation about the doors being charmed... It seemed that knowing too much might not necessarily be a good thing at times. "Ahem! So this person is Mr. Adrian?" Brother Assist changed the focus of the conversation by asking Gu Fei about the NPC that had emerged from the cellar.

"Yup. He looks exactly the same as I remembered."

Mr. Adrian discovered the players around him after coming out of the cellar and reacted like how any NPC would. Craning his neck, he demanded, "Who are you people?! What are you doing inside my property?!"

No one bothered to answer him. He was just a programmed AI, so who would care about the attitude this NPC was treating them with? Only the quest maniac June's Rain would. It was a pity, though, that she was no longer around, as she had broken inside Mr. Adrian's mansion from the front door and was currently

ransacking his place. Honestly speaking, that was the right way to play a RPG.

“What should we do? Do we take him out here and now?” Brother Assist asked.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea. Would killing Mr. Adrian and telling the Werewolves about the resolution of their blackmailing issue complete my quest?” Gu Fei asked.

“I don’t think that’s going to work. We have to at least provide some evidence,” Sword Demon opined.

“How are we going to prove that this guy is the one manipulating the strings behind the scene?” Everyone was now examining Mr. Adrian. Although the six of them were pretty much ignoring his existence, Mr. Adrian still continued to shout at them, “Who are you people?! What are you doing inside my property?! ”

“What nonsense are you guys spouting? Can we even attack him without proof of his evil deeds?” Young Master Han asked.

“You’re right. Every NPC is protected from getting PKed. This special protection will only be removed when certain conditions of a quest are met,” Brother Assist affirmed.

The six of them pondered on this matter as they surrounded Mr. Adrian. This was when June’s Rain came out of the mansion while shaking her head, “I didn’t find anything that can open the cellar doors.”

These men looked at one another before running inside Mr. Adrian’s mansion together. They could hear Mr. Adrian shouting from behind them, “What are you people doing?! You bunch of burglars!”

The burglars began ransacking through Mr. Adrian’s mansion at top speed. Unfortunately, they did not find anything that would give them a hint about Mr. Adrian’s evil scheme. All of them walked out of the mansion while sorrowfully shaking their heads

just like June's Rain.

"You group of burglars!" Adrian angrily pointed at them. "I'm going to report you! I'm going to report all of you!" With that, Adrian rushed off.

"Uhm... Are we in trouble?" Brother Assist was of course the first to panic.

"Would he call the guards over?" Royal God Call was the next to speak up.

"Has anyone exchanged blows with NPC guards before?" War Without Wounds asked. Everyone turned to look at Gu Fei. He was a PvP addict, after all; guards would be sent to pursue him once his PK value went beyond 20 points.

However, Gu Fei merely shook his head. "I've only been chased by NPC guards; I never dared to trade blows with them."

Everyone sucked in a cold breath when they heard this. If even Gu Fei did not dare to fight the NPC guards, then they were certainly fearsome when it came to fighting.

"Are they that powerful?" Royal God Call asked.

"I don't know, but many of them are surely on their way now," Gu Fei replied.

They looked at one another. In the silence that ensued, the act of flipping through a book sounded somewhat loud. Looking at the origin of the flipping sound, they saw Young Master Han step out of the mansion with an old journal in his hand. He was currently rifling through it.

"What's that?" The men crowded around him.

"A ledger," Young Master Han replied.

"What did you discover?" everyone asked.

"Nothing, actually. Still, it has Mr. Adrian's handwriting," Young Master Han told them.

Everyone put two and two together and turned to address Gu Fei, “Where’s that letter you got?”

“I passed it to Oathless Sword...” Gu Fei was dismayed. He was too much of a goody two-shoes sometimes. “But does any of us even know how to analyze handwriting?” he asked.

“It’s useless even if we could. That sort of skill that a player might possess won’t affect the quest plot like this. If it’s a particular clue, it will surely require a skill in-game, such as the Appraisal skill,” Brother Assist said.

“Appraisal skill? Can the Appraisal skill be used for handwriting analysis?”

“It was just an example,” Brother Assist replied.

“Maybe not the Appraisal skill a player uses, but it might be possible for a NPC who is a Master Appraiser,” Young Master Han said.

“That makes sense. But the problem is that we don’t have the note with us....”

“Let’s get it from Oathless Sword, then. Why won’t he give it to us when we are trying to help him complete the quest?” War Without Wounds asked rhetorically.

“He he...” Young Master Han suddenly chuckled.

The five men got goosebumps on their skin once they saw the smile on his lips. “What have you thought of now?”

“I thought of a method to make Oathless Sword return the letter to us,” Young Master Han answered.

“Needless to say, I’m sure it’s a very despicable method.” They five men shook their heads repeatedly.

Young Master Han did not say a word, merely sending Youthful Reflection a message: “We’ve found a huge lead.”

“F*ck!” Youthful Reflection treated this message as bad news as

he turned to Oathless Sword with tears streaming down his cheeks, “Young Master’s Elite has gotten a head start.”

“Don’t panic.” Oathless Sword was still rather calm, saying, “This is our quest, so the initiative still lies in our hands. Even if he found a lead, there’s no telling that I would accept it. This quest has just begun; hold in your emotion and briefly negotiate with him.”

Youthful Reflection waited for quite some time before calmly replying, “Oh? What lead is this?”

“We need the letter,” Young Master Han said, instead.

“What for?” Youthful Reflection unhurriedly asked him.

Actually, real, good-to-honest mercenaries were expected to directly inform their employers of any discovery. However, in reality, most mercenaries would not do such a thing; even the employers themselves would not make such a demand from their mercenaries, resulting in the simple exchange becoming a contest of wits.

Young Master Han had often used any opportunity to make a killing off of Traversing Four Seas. This time, however, he immediately told Youthful Reflection that the villager, Mr. Adrian, was acting extremely suspicious and they wanted to use the note to reveal his despicable plot.

Youthful Reflection was hesitant to trust his words, but he figured that it would not hurt to try. Soon, they quickly brought the note to the mansion near the church in Yeguang Village.

“But Mr. Adrian isn’t around right now!” the others exclaimed in puzzlement when they heard Young Master Han’s words.

“And that’s precisely what we want!” Young Master Han laughed.

Chapter 302 - The Clueless Traversing Four Seas

Young Master's Elite's six men dragged Xiaoyu to hide by the courtyard of the nearby dilapidated church. All of them crouched by the church's wall as they staked out Mr. Adrian's mansion. Soon, players of Traversing Four Seas arrived from every direction and surrounded the premise. Finally, the three core leaders, Oathless Sword, Youthful Reflection, and Gale Force, made it to the place and began positioning their guild members.

The airhead June's Rain felt very confused. "Mr. Adrian is not here, so what are they trying to do?"

It was difficult to keep June's Rain up to speed with their thoughts, so the six men chose to stay silent, instead. Only Brother Assist was a little anxious about everything. "Won't Mr. Adrian be back soon?"

"Mhm-mhm. Didn't he say he's off to call the guards? What do you think he'll do at the sight of many players cordoning off his mansion when he gets back with the guards?" Young Master Han asked.

"This..." Everyone could feel chill ran down their spines. "Isn't this going a bit overboard?"

"No. It's very interesting!" Young Master Han happily propped himself up against the wall using his arm. He then fished out a bottle of liquor from his dimensional pocket using his free hand. It was evident that he wanted to pair his drinking with the pitiful plight the Traversing Four Seas' players would soon find themselves in.

Traversing Four Seas completed their cordon of the mansion. Holding the note in his hand, Oathless Sword took a deep breath and knocked on the door thrice before he darted behind the

formation, making people wonder if he was truly a Warrior with how quickly he had moved.

Obviously, no one was going to answer the door since the mansion was currently empty. These players started looking at one another in confusion after waiting anxiously for quite some time.

Oathless Sword went forward and knocked on the door again. He did not rush to retreat behind the safety of his troops this time. Instead, Oathless Sword went up to the door and placed his ear right on its surface in an attempt to hear any sound coming from inside the mansion. Youthful Reflection and Gale Force followed suit. Eventually, the three men shook their heads.

“Shall we go in and take a look?” the three men exchanged glances before breaking in.

“He he he!” The six peeping men were giggling in their mirth.

“What are they doing there? Are they planning to steal gold ore, too?” It was now June’s Rain’s turn to feel anxious.

“Nah. They’re here to look for someone,” Gu Fei consoled her.

June’s Rain was instantly pacified. Indeed, it was very easy to placate naïve people.

Oathless Sword and the other two entered Mr. Adrian’s mansion and searched around it, but they could naturally not find anything suspicious. The trio saw that the place was a bit messy, but they could presently not think of why it would be so, and they walked out of the mansion filled with confusion.

The six men were all snickering by now. Suddenly, they heard someone outside the Traversing Four Seas’ cordon yell, “Who are you people?!”

The six men subconsciously jerked their necks back when they heard this. Mr. Adrian had finally returned. Gu Fei lamented to June’s Rain, “Hear that? The revived Mr. Adrian is still the same as ever, and his voice is just like last time.”

“Revived?” June’s Rain asked, confused.

“Never mind.” Gu Fei forcefully calmed himself.

All craned their necks out to continue peeping. Although they originally thought that Young Master Han had gone a little overboard when he purposefully set up the Traversing Four Seas against the NPC guards Mr. Adrian had called over, the sight of Mr. Adrian all by himself made them feel rather disappointed.

Brother Assist glumly kept his little booklet, “And here I thought I would finally get a chance to gauge a NPC guard’s strength!”

Before Oathless Sword could even send out the command himself, the Traversing Four Seas’ players had already taken the initiative to surround Mr. Adrian. Oathless Sword walked over in a dignified manner and waved the note in front of the NPC. “Mr. Adrian, we already know what you’ve done. Why don’t you give yourself up?”

All the players present felt very nervous, and this included the six men of Young Master’s Elite. Oathless Sword was undoubtedly displaying an item to the NPC. Whether this would trigger any condition for the quest or not would entirely depend on this one move.

In the end, the NPC Adrian did not even glance at the note in Oathless Sword’s hand and merely continued to angrily point at the men surrounding him. “You burglars! Just what do you all intend to do?!”

Oathless Sword stepped even closer to Mr. Adrian and pushed the note right up to the latter’s eyes. “Read it. The note.” He was already using the item as blatantly as possible, yet Mr. Adrian was still ignoring his action.

The Traversing Four Seas’ members were disappointed; it seemed that the item was useless in this place.

The six men of Young Master’s Elite felt very gratified by this

outcome. Had Mr. Adrian allowed Traversing Four Seas to expose him this easily, they would have pretty much busied themselves with the quest for nothing.

Mr. Adrian was still trapped inside the players' encirclement as the three core members of Traversing Four Seas had an emergency meeting, resulting in Youthful Reflection hailing Young Master Han: "The note is useless."

"Is that so? That can't be!" Young Master Han faked his disbelief.

"Are you guys sure that he's the one?" Youthful Reflection continued to ask.

"Of course," Young Master Han replied.

The three men continued to discuss the matter among themselves.

"Do you guys have any proof?" Youthful Reflection asked.

"Isn't the note itself the proof?" Young Master Han asked back.

"But he didn't admit to it!" Youthful Reflection exclaimed.

"Think of ways to force him to confess, then!" Young Master Han suggested.

Youthful Reflection slapped his forehead, and then he thought of the same method of analyzing and comparing Mr. Adrian's handwriting. Thus, the three core members of Traversing Four Seas entered Mr. Adrian's mansion again and began ransacking his place.

"Burglars! You're all nothing but a bunch of burglars! You people are going to pay for your actions!" Mr. Adrian continued to act his part and angrily berated the players.

Young Master Han reached inside his dimensional pocket and touched Mr. Adrian's ledger, feeling quite pleased with himself. He eagerly awaited Youthful Reflection's good news.

"There isn't another copy of Mr. Adrian's handwriting inside the

mansion, right?" Brother Assist worriedly asked.

"Nope." Young Master Han confidently answered.

"You're so nasty." The rest of them sighed. He was essentially forcing Traversing Four Seas to compromise with him!

After searching through Mr. Adrian's possession for another round, the three men came out empty-handed. The three men were left with no choice but to take out a paper and pen and fiercely demand for Mr. Adrian to copy the note from where he stood.

Such a trashy method was basically a direct attempt to take advantage of the NPC's rigid AI. Unfortunately, Adrian was someone who bore a heavy responsibility; he demonstrated a more sophisticated programing than the average NPC when he ignored their demand outright. Oathless Sword wished he could throttle Mr. Adrian right there and then, but no one could unfortunately go around breaking the system's rule protecting NPCs from violent player interactions.

At such an impasse, Young Master Han's message arrived with cold indifference: "How did it go?"

"We're still working on it," was Youthful Reflection's reply.

"Perhaps, you should let our mercenary group's Thousand Miles Drunk interact with Mr. Adrian. After all, he is the one who obtained the side quest," Young Master Han suggested.

What he had said made perfect sense, game-wise. Oathless Sword dangling the letter in front of Mr. Adrian was ineffective, but it might be a different matter if Gu Fei was the one dangling it. At the end of the day, the quest and the item were obtained by him. Furthermore, Oathless Sword and his two core leaders were aware of another piece of important information that Gu Fei did not know: The Werewolves had explicitly said that they only trusted him.

“Does that mean our only option is to depend on that guy for this part of the quest?” Oathless Sword and his men were naturally aggrieved by this.

“Why don’t we just let him have a go?” Gale Force asked.

“Has anyone found any method to win the Werewolves’ trust yet?” Youthful Reflection asked everyone else. When all the guild members shook their heads, Youthful Reflection grinded his teeth and told Young Master Han to send Gu Fei over: “Fine. Let him have a go!”

“Hmm... Maybe this quest will end once Miles uses that note to interact with Mr. Adrian,” Royal God Call said.

“I doubt that.” Brother Assist shook his head, saying, “There shouldn’t be this sort of condition for all the quests in Parallel World. The identity of Miles is only unique to those Werewolves; any other NPC, just like Mr. Adrian, won’t treat him differently. Logically speaking, he doesn’t have any special interactions with this brand-new Adrian, so he won’t treat Miles differently.”

“Let me find out!” Gu Fei was planning to ask Fleeting Smile about this, but he discovered that the latter had already gone offline when he pulled out his friends list. “...Okay. I didn’t manage to find anything out. You guys can carry on discussing.”

Brother Assist was very curious about the person whom Gu Fei was getting his information from as that individual seemed to have a bigger information network than him, but Gu Fei had already said to him that he could not reveal anything about the person.

“Truthfully, there’s no guarantee that we can even resolve this matter by analyzing his handwriting!” War Without Wounds said.

“Are you questioning my deduction skills?” Young Master Han tossed him a sidelong glance.

“Don’t mind me. I’m just playing the devil’s advocate here, that’s all! Ha ha ha...” War Without Wounds quickly tried to laugh it off.

“What nonsense,” everyone scoffed.

“Alright, I’m heading over now!” Gu Fei stood up.

“Slow down! If you get there so soon, they’ll think that we are just spying on them from nearby this whole time,” Royal God Call cautioned.

Gu Fei looked at him with a baffled expression, “But we are hiding over here to spy on them.”

“That’s why you gotta hide it! How can we call this spying if you are gonna expose it?!”

The rest of them nodded their heads in agreement. “Wait a bit longer before you head over!”

June’s Rain’s eyes were glazed over this whole time, not understanding a word that they were saying.

As such, they intentionally waited for quite some time. Receiving a few more messages from Youthful Reflection asking Young Master Han to hurry Gu Fei over. Gu Fei moved to go to them. This was when a flurry of footsteps was heard coming from the main road. All of them craned their necks to look and were stunned by what they saw. Dozens of guards clad in armor emblazoned with Yueye City’s seal just so happened to arrive at this moment.

The Traversing Four Seas’ players, for their part, were clueless on why these unidentified NPCs were hurrying to their location. Such a scale of mobilization of NPCs was a rare sight, and these players could not help but ogle them as they marched toward them; some of the Traversing Four Seas’ players even attempted to engage the NPCs in a conversation. Brother Assist already had his little booklet out and ready, as Young Master Han repeatedly nodded his head. “What did I tell you all? How could my deductions ever be wrong?”

“Mr. Adrian!” the guards hollered.

All the Traversing Four Seas’ members present were startled.

Adrian, who was still neck deep in the encirclement, shouted back, “Sir, I’m right here! Hurry and eradicate these burglars for me!”

“Burglars?” While the Traversing Four Seas players were still feeling confused, the NPC guards’ swords were already out of their scabbards. Raising his weapon, the captain bellowed, “Prepare to charge!”

In an instant, white light dispersed from the captain and a halo could be seen glowing beneath the feet of the guards around him.

“How OP! A party-wide skill!” The people secretly watching this scene from afar were the first to react to this.

Chapter 303 - The Dauntless Guards

The NPC guards were currently using a never-before-seen party-wide skill. Hearing their captain's command, these NPC guards instantly positioned themselves to charge forward.

The Traversing Four Seas' members were truly rather pitiful. On top of not knowing why these unidentified NPCs were moving to attack them, just as they were asking one another questions, such as "What burglars?" and "Who are they calling burglars?", the NPCs proceeded to charge right at them, overwhelming them all.

"F*CK!" the players cried out in dismay. They were truly at a loss on how to deal with this bunch of emotionless AIs that was currently charging at them.

The NPC guards enveloped in white light charged toward the players in a wedge (人) formation at first before changing into a horizontal formation next. These city guards effectively disrupted the Traversing Four Seas' ranks as they rampaged about with impunity, leaving the players rather helpless. Plenty of players were even sent flying upward upon contact, creating an exaggeratedly chaotic scene.

"He he he!" Young Master's Elite was overwhelmed with mirth at this point.

Brother Assist recorded everything as quickly as possible on his little booklet while muttering incessantly, "This is truly vicious... absolutely malicious..."

"Oh, the humanity!" Royal God Call feigned horror at the scene unfolding before him by shutting his two eyes jokingly.

"Did we perhaps go a bit overboard?" Sword Demon could not really stand the slaughter happening before him.

"Our hands are tied. How can we even stop this now?" Young Master Han actually sighed when he said this.

“Nothing we can do now,” Gu Fei chipped in. Even he felt utterly useless in the face of these indomitable NPC guards. Be it their charging formation or attacking style, all the moves were executed seamlessly and in perfect sync. This was one area where no person could compete against the AI. Who knew how long and arduous would humans have to train to achieve such level of prowess as this bunch of AIs?

There was a phrase kung fu practitioners would often use to describe such opponent: an enemy with no weak point.

While there were ways to forcefully create an opening in an opponent, a certain level of strength and skill would still be required to accomplish this. Who knew how high these guards’ level was? It was entirely probable for each of them to possess the strength of a Boss. Since they were currently moving as a team, not even the level 40 Gu Fei would stand a chance against them. He might be a formidable fighter in real life, but he was currently in a MMORPG. Ultimately, everything in it was dictated by the level and type of equipment one had, and skills alone could not make up for those.

The Traversing Four Seas’ players would of course not just allow themselves to be ripped apart by these NPC guards without putting up a fight. They did their best to evade the guards assaulting them and backed themselves into formation in accordance to the order of Youthful Reflection, their de facto leader at times like this. Youthful Reflection was currently shouting himself hoarse as he flooded the guild channel with messages: “Archer formation! Archer formation!” This particular formation was something that he had researched and drilled into the guild members himself, so it was something that he was very proud of.

“That’s Traversing Four Seas for you; they’ve always got a few tricks up their sleeves,” the six men commended.

With the Warriors and similar job classes’ tanking the NPC guards’ attacks, the Traversing Four Seas’ archer formation was

completely set up. Following this, the Mages prepared to begin their spell bombardment.

“Fire away!” Youthful Reflection could no longer afford to wait for a perfect opportunity. Seeing that they had enough Archers in place, he immediately commanded them to attack.

The sky was blotted with arrows as they flew toward the NPCs. The first wave of arrows momentarily halted the NPCs’ frontal assault. As the Traversing Four Seas’ players were finally seeing a sliver of hope with their first assault, they heard the captain of the opposing side yell out, “Protect our Charge!”

The NPCs each pulled out a shield when they heard this command and firmly placed them in front. Following this, the Traversing Four Seas’ second wave of arrows sailed through the air.

“Charge!”

The guards hid behind their shields and placed their swords beside the shields as they surged toward the players.

“Shameless!” The Traversing Four Seas’ members were in tears as the formation that they had painstakingly set up was easily demolished by the NPCs.

Based on the character designs for the various job classes in Parallel World, only the Guardians – the job class known for its high HP and low offense – were capable of using shields to defend themselves. And yet, these NPC guards were able to demonstrate nigh indomitable offense with their swords alone; since they could also use shields to defend themselves, what else could the system be but shameless for allowing these NPCs to possess high offense and defense? This was technically no different from combining magic and martial arts together.

Even Young Master’s Elite felt shocked at this kind of development. As Brother Assist continued to record everything

down, he could not help but wonder, “What exactly is the job class of these NPC guards? Are they Warriors or Knights?” As the others shook their heads in confusion, he said, “I’m going to head over and use my Appraisal skill to find out.”

“There’s no need for that,” Royal God Call stopped him, saying, “The guild channel is in an uproar right now; plenty of players have tried appraising them, yet all they got is a bunch of question marks.”

“They must be pretty high level, then!” Brother Assist exclaimed.

The six men returned their focus on the fighting field. The battered members of Traversing Four Seas were beginning to understand the situation, and many of them cried out in shock, “They are Yueye City’s guards!”

Seals, emblems, and such were used in Parallel World to categorize or separate the various organizations from one another. Naturally, each in-game city had its respective seal, which was displayed all over the streets and hung on various government structures. The image that was emblazoned across the NPC guards’ shields was the very same seal of Yueye City.

However, although these players had finally managed to identify their opponents, they were still clueless as to why these NPCs were attacking them. Everyone could simply not fathom how they had offended Yueye City’s NPC guards, which resulted into their current disastrous predicament.

With the collapse of the Traversing Four Seas’ archer formation, any other forms of resistance that they tried to employ were easily suppressed by the NPC guards.

Whether they used their Mages to bombard the ground, sent their Thieves in Stealth mode to sneak attack, or made their Warriors clash head on with the NPC guards, there was only one outcome whenever they made contact: every player was sent flying outward.

Player after player of Traversing Four Seas was sent flying outward; in the end, all of them no longer bothered to follow their bosses' orders and instead strove to escape the place using any possible routes. Oathless Sword and the other two men lost their will to resist as well, and each of them took the remaining players with them to flee.

The NPC guards did not give chase to the fleeing Traversing Four Seas' players and just stayed where they were. In a short while, the only remaining players in the area were the heavily injured.

"Did you guys realize something?!" Brother Assist asked in wonder, "Not one player died even after taking their devastating frontal assault."

"I've already noticed that long ago," Young Master Han said dryly.

No matter when or how, players would always depart in white lights when their HP dropped to 0. Thus far, the only white light that they had seen was the very same one enveloping the NPC guards; not one player of Traversing Four Seas had contributed to this. After such a slightly drawn-out fight, the players had merely fallen to the ground, injured, and were only subdued.

In the next moment, the NPC guard captain in charge of the operation commanded, "Bring them to the prison."

"Yes, sir!" the NPC guards obediently said. These NPCs proceeded to gather all the subdued players and line them up. Using an unknown method of suppression, they prevented any players from resisting their arrest. The captain formally bowed to Mr. Adrian before departing with the NPC guards along with the apprehended players.

Everyone in Young Master's Elite was left flabbergasted. Even Young Master Han had not expected such an outcome when he had set the two parties to collide.

“What do those NPCs mean? Where are they bringing the players to?” Everyone urged Royal God Call to find out from the Traversing Four Seas’ guild channel.

“There’s no news there. None of the captured players sent out a message at all,” Royal God Call informed the others after he had checked through the guild channel.

“This... Is this similar to players being jailed, with their contact to others restricted?” Brother Assist postulated.

“So all those men are gonna be sent to prison?”

“How long will they be gone for?”

As the six men were discussing this, all of them inadvertently left their hiding place by the church courtyard and watched the leaving figures of the NPC guards with the captured men.

This odd procession of NPCs and players attracted quite a number of onlookers along the way. None of the other Traversing Four Seas’ members dared to go near the procession for fear of getting captured as well. Other players who were curious and wanted to ask the captured men a few questions were stopped by the NPC guards. Anyone who refused to heed their warning was sent flying outward.

“It’s a huge mistake to go up against the NPCs!” was the conclusion Brother Assist had arrived to after all this. Brother Assist sighed heavily as he closed the booklet in his hand.

“You better be careful when you PvP next time. You’ve just witnessed the might of the NPC guards!” War Without Wounds warned Gu Fei.

“There are usually few guards around the city,” Gu Fei reasoned.

“It’s only a matter of time before a pack of guards pursue a PK maniac like you,” Royal God Call taunted.

“As someone who has accrued so much felony to his name, they’ll

probably just kill him on sight,” War Without Wounds added.

The six men’s conversation had digressed to something completely irrelevant. Young Master Han took this chance to get everyone back on track. “Enough of this nonsense; time for us to get back to business.”

“Business?” Witnessing such a high-level fight had made these men forget what they were in the location for.

“...Let me contact Youthful Reflection,” Young Master Han said while rolling his eyes.

In the end, he did not receive even one reply. Youthful Reflection was clearly online, yet not one word of response came from him.

“Did that guy get himself apprehended as well?” everyone wondered.

“The note happened to be in his possession, right?” These mercenaries exchanged looks.

“What’s the rush?” Young Master Han asked, saying, “Seeing what has just happened to Traversing Four Seas, it’s obvious that the quest can’t continue today. Let’s just head back first!”

“Yeah. It’s about time for me to log out, anyway.” Gu Fei glanced at the time. He did not manage to get anything done tonight beyond running back and forth for the quest.

The six men of Young Master’s Elite prepared to head back to Yueye City, while June’s Rain happily rushed inside Mr. Adrian’s mansion to resume her research of the underground cellar. She had apparently not given up her objective all this while.

The NPC guards that had apprehended a few Traversing Four Seas members loomed ahead as they marched toward Yueye City. The six men of Young Master’s Elite coincidentally met the other members of Traversing Four Seas on their way back to the city.

Oathless Sword and Gale Force were bringing some members

back to the city as well; their sullen gazes were affixed on the others that had been apprehended by the NPC guards in front of them. They remained listless even when they saw the six men of Young Master's Elite, and not one of them could even manage the feeblest smile.

“Guild Leader Oathless,” Young Master Han greeted the other first.

“Mercenary Leader Han,” Oathless Sword weakly returned the greeting.

“What happened?” Young Master Han pointed to the troops in front. “Why are some of your men together with those NPCs? I’ve sent Youthful Reflection messages, yet I haven’t gotten even one reply from him.”

Young Master Han callously asked this question despite knowing what had just happened to Traversing Four Seas. For his fellow mercenaries who knew the truth of the matter, Young Master Han seemed to be strongly asking for a beating.

Chapter 304 - Yueye City's Master Appraiser

Oathless Sword narrated Traversing Four Seas' recent ordeal to Young Master's Elite in a plaintive tone. The six men felt pain inside as Oathless Sword was recounting the unfortunate incident to them, yet that pain was not because of sadness but because of having to prevent themselves from bursting into laughter.

As soon as Oathless Sword finished his narration, he asked the six men for their take on the matter. "What do you think has caused this?"

The six of them looked at one another. Young Master Han coughed before answering, "Maybe this is part of the quest?"

"That's what we think, too. In fact, we are following them to find out what's going to happen to them," Oathless Sword said.

It was just as everyone had expected in the end; the bunch of players that the NPC guards had captured were marched straight into prison upon their return to Yueye City, and amid everyone's watchful gazes, these players disappeared inside the prison entrance.

Although imprisonment would forcefully restrict all manners of communication, Parallel World had a feature that allowed others to visit prisoners. Naturally, money was required to do this. Provided that the fee was paid, any player could enter the cell and do anything with the convicted, except for bailing them out, that was. There was no time limit for this either, much to the delight of those couples who could not bear spending even a second away from their other halves.

Oathless Sword only crept over once he saw the NPC guards leave upon locking up his underlings in the prison. He approached the place with as much apprehension as he had when he was earlier

knocking on Mr. Adrian's door; while 30% of him was heading forward, 70% of him was already preparing to bolt out. He was worried that the system would identify him as the boss of the convicted players and detain him as well.

His worry turned out to be unfounded, though, as the prison guards merely continued on their usual tasks, unfazed by Oathless Sword's presence. After paying the fee for this visit, Oathless Sword entered the cell to talk to his comrades.

The imprisoned players were as clueless about this as Oathless Sword. The only thing they knew more than him was that they had to spend four hours inside the cell. The system did not provide them any explanation for their imprisonment, though. All they heard was the NPCs referring to them as 'felons' whenever they conversed with one another, causing everyone to feel mortified at being labeled as such.

From their perspective, the only thing they were guilty of was surrounding Mr. Adrian... Such an action should not warrant them being sent to prison, though! When did NPCs have such rights, anyway? Those imprisoned were absolutely incensed by this.

Oathless Sword was already downcast when he entered the prison, yet he looked much worse when he finally exited it. He stared blankly at the members of Young Master's Elite that had been waiting for him just outside the prison. Eventually, he woke from his reverie and asked the six men, "Is there anything else?"

Young Master Han sighed, "Did you forget? We're here for the note you wanted Miles to test out with Mr. Adrian."

"Oh..." Oathless Sword was out of it at the moment, so he did not think deeply about this and just handed the note over to Gu Fei.

"How long are they inside for?" Gu Fei asked when he took the note from him.

"Four hours!" Oathless Sword answered.

“So I guess we can’t continue the quest today?” Gu Fei probed.

Oathless Sword nodded his head and turned his attention to Young Master Han. “Can you contact the other mercenary leaders?” As Young Master Han shook his head, Oathless Sword looked absolutely broken now. “G*dd*mn! I still have to inform all those people about this.” Evidently, it had always been Youthful Reflection’s responsibility to contact the mercenary leaders about anything. Guild Leader Oathless Sword did not seem to know how to handle such trivialities.

“Shall we continue this matter tomorrow, too?” Gu Fei was now waving the note to Oathless Sword.

“Of course,” Oathless Sword felt a slight twinge of annoyance at the sight of the note, wishing he could just get rid of it. After exchanging a few words with Young Master’s Elite, he led his remaining men away from the place. The six men could hear him grumbling all the way and his words were littered with expletives.

“Should we.... Go and test it out now?” Gu Fei sought the five’s advice regarding the note.

“Of course. Otherwise, there’s no way I’m getting any sleep tonight,” Brother Assist answered.

“Do you guys even sleep at night?” Gu Fei asked, skeptical.

“What nonsense!” the five men chided Gu Fei for not viewing them as humans.

Inquiring to the locals along the way, the six men finally located the system-assigned Master Appraiser in Yueye City. She was a witch wearing a half mask and was in charge of teaching every player in the city about the Appraisal skill.

“Take out the ledger.” Gu Fei nudged Young Master Han.

“Wait a sec!” Brother Assist called out.

“What?” Everyone looked at him questioningly.

“Let me give this a shot first. To find out if this quest requires someone who has a pre-established relationship with the Werewolves like Miles to complete,” Brother Assist said. “Let’s find out what is the logic behind Parallel World’s d*mnable design.”

“By your words, you can’t be the one to test it out. You and Miles have come into contact with the Werewolves, so common sense dictates that you would most likely be included in Miles’ quest,” Sword Demon reasoned.

“That’s true,” Brother Assist nodded his head in agreement.

“I’ll test it, instead!” Sword Demon took the note and ledger from them.

Gu Fei watched this team of experts at work, slightly moved by their dedication to researching the game. How great would it be if there were more people like them that were equally passionate about kung fu!

Sword Demon presented the ledger and note to the Master Appraiser and requested for her to analyze if the handwriting in both items matched. Just as they were worrying about the NPC not understanding the instruction, the witch brought her two fingers upright, instead, “200 gold coins.”

“F*CK!” the six men cursed.

“That’s so shameless!”

“Profiteer!”

“Despicable.”

“The system’s greed knows no bounds.”

“Is money the only thing the gaming company cares about?!”

They flung insults at the system for almost ten minutes before Sword Demon feebly interjected, “Hey... Are we still having these items analyzed or what?”

“Of course, we are. A sheep’s wool grows on a sheep¹, after all,” Young Master Han replied.

Thus, Sword Demon forked out the fee of 200 gold coins and handed the sum over to the Master Appraiser along with the ledger and note.

The Master Appraiser glanced briefly at the note before flipping through the ledger noisily. Just as the six were starting to wonder which page she would stop at, the Master Appraiser returned the two items to Sword Demon and declared, “It’s the same handwriting.”

The entire process of analyzing the handwriting did not take longer than five seconds. The six men did not even get to experience the anxiety that came with not knowing what the final outcome would be. They spent 200 gold coins just like that, yet they did not even get to properly enjoy any bit of thrill from this. They could not help but feel that the system was being too cheap; the system should at least show them the process of analyzing the handwriting since it was charging such a high price. Such perfunctory action left them thoroughly unsatisfied.

Whatever the case might be, the system’s action clearly proved two things. First, Mr. Adrian was indeed the one pulling the strings from behind the scenes. Second, Gu Fei was not the only one who could complete the quest. Therefore, Young Master Han absconding with Mr. Adrian’s ledger had truly brought Traversing Four Seas unnecessary trouble.

“Have we completed this quest? Will we get Mr. Adrian’s confession if we head back now?” Sword Demon asked everyone.

These men were still suspicious. The logic behind Parallel World was hardly congruent with reality. Things would progress according to how reality worked at times, and matters would rigidly be constrained according to how MMO worked at other times. It was this unpredictability that tortured the players

endlessly....

Choosing to play it safe, the six men requested the Master Appraiser to provide evidence to back her findings that the writer of the note and ledger was the same person. They believed that any proof she provided them would automatically cause Mr. Adrian to confess.

“Proof? My word is all the proof you need!” the Master Appraiser said haughtily.

The six men left the premise in great displeasure after being regarded so contemptuously by a NPC.

“Should we see Mr. Adrian now?”

“Let’s go; no way I’m getting any sleep if we don’t....”

Thus, the six men once more rushed toward Yeguang Village, meeting quite a few Yunduan City players along the way. After being informed that the quest could not continue today by Oathless Sword, these players felt very unhappy at essentially having wasted a whole night in-game doing nothing.

“Looks like Traversing Four Seas has offended quite a lot of players due to this quest,” Brother Assist commented as he looked at the disgruntled faces around them.

“They are lacking in the necessary qualities of professional mercenaries,” Young Master Han said. As the five men looked at him, he added, “Us included.”

“Tsk!” everyone scorned.

“There’s no way to inculcate unity into this mess of mercenary groups, anyway. The Traversing Four Seas’ players should thank their lucky stars if they do succeed in this guild quest; them failing would be entirely due to this very fact. Just you wait and see,” Young Master Han predicted.

“Why are you like this? You seem to actually be wishing for them

to fail!” Gu Fei remarked.

“I’m just disappointed with this situation we’ve found ourselves in. They hired all these mercenaries for the quest, yet they don’t show enough trust in us. He he he... Did they really think money is enough to make everyone work for them? They just don’t have the right qualities to be the boss,” Young Master Han scoffed.

“I think you’re just overthinking things again...” Gu Fei said, adding, “It may not be the lack of trust, but rather your frequent extortion attempts that have caused them to be fearful, causing them to avoid us. This whole situation is whacked.”

“Extortion? You can hardly say that the meager sum we’ve gotten from them is that. They’re merely jealous of us being the ones to resolve their problems at crucial moments. This is exactly why they’ve refused our help time and time again. Honestly, we are just six men. Do you really think the fee that they are paying us is more than that of The Black Hand’s hundred men? Far from it, I say! We are only costing them probably just twenty of their men!”

“That’s ridiculous!” Gu Fei was now pissed. “Just I alone can take down twenty men of The Black Hand!”

“That’s what I’ve been telling you! We haven’t been extorting really. The price I’ve given them has been extremely reasonable!” Young Master Han justified himself.

Sword Demon, who had been standing beside him all this while, nudged him. “You did extort money from them, though. After all, you hid that ledger from them just then.”

Young Master Han eyed him with disdain. “That’s not extortion; that’s competition.”

Everyone was simply speechless.

Chapter 305 - Encircling to Suppress Mr. Adrian

The departure of Yunduan City's players in Yeguang Village made it appear exceptionally deserted. The NPCs were just standing on their assigned positions, never running or chattering about like what players would often do. No one spoke a word as the six men made their way toward Mr. Adrian's mansion. Upon their arrival to his place, a familiar figure busying about promptly greeted their sight.

"That lady sure is very persistent." Everyone was in awe.

"Xiaoyu!" Gu Fei hollered as he waved his hand.

June's Rain, who was laboring hard in Mr. Adrian's backyard, turned around and saw the six men drawing near her. Casually wiping the sweat off her brows, she waved back at them in greeting. That one gesture shattered the rather attractive sweaty look she had going, as though her face became instantly pixelated.

"What are you doing now?" Gu Fei came forward and asked; June's Rain was currently half buried in soil at the moment.

"I'm about to dig out a passage to infiltrate Mr. Adrian's cellar from this side. What do you think? Pretty ingenious, eh?" June's Rain boasted.

"Will it work?" Gu Fei asked haltingly.

"I won't know till I try," June's Rain replied.

"Won't Adrian berate you for the mess you're making?" Gu Fei asked.

"Isn't he gone?" June's Rain was perplexed.

"He is back!" Gu Fei informed her, saying "He's been home ever since that bunch of people fought earlier!"

“Is that so? But I didn’t see him!” June’s Rain was absolutely mollified when she learned of this, hurriedly climbing out of the pit she had literally dug herself into.

“Don’t panic!” Gu Fei coaxed, saying, “You should stay inside this for now. He’ll be gone pretty soon.”

“Oh!” June’s Rain sighed in relief. “Did he see me?”

“I don’t think so...” Gu Fei felt as if he were cajoling a child.

“Go and see if he is gone,” June’s Rain requested, sending Gu Fei away.

“Right away...” Gu Fei immediately stood up. When he turned around, he saw the other five men staring blankly at the lady... Plenty of methods could attract these men’s attention.

“Ahem!” Gu Fei cleared his throat loudly. The other five men returned to their senses and did their best to conceal their momentary loss of composure.

“Let’s not tarry,” Gu Fei said.

“Sword Demon and Assist, see if there are any other exits from the mansion. Wounds, guard the entrance to the cellar; it’s possible for it to be connected to the mansion. Royal, guard the side of the mansion; it should allow you to attack from three different directions. Miles, you and I will come in from the front. Any questions?” Young Master Han rattled off his orders in one breath.

“Nope!” With that, they all left to take up their assigned positions. Sword Demon and Brother Assist circled around the place and did not discover any other exits of sort, so they kept watch of the windows. Royal God Call selected a good position for sniping, while War Without Wounds camped by the cellar entrance. June’s Rain occasionally popped her head out from the pit like a gopher, but she never once spotted War Without Wounds who was merely three meters away from her....

Gu Fei and Young Master Han proceeded to knock on the mansion's door. Who knew what NPCs were doing inside their homes, or perhaps they would all be standing next to the doors all the while, waiting for any players to visit it. All they knew was that Mr. Adrian quickly opened the door once they knocked on it.

Patiently conversing with NPC was something only a player who had read too many webnovels or who was simple-minded like June's Rain would do. Young Master Han was a no-nonsense person, though. Taking out the ledger and note, he dangled them right in front of Mr. Adrian's face the first chance he got. "Your blackmailing of the Werewolves has already been exposed. Die!"

His action and words were very plain. Taking out the necessary items that were required, he made his intention to advance the plot of the quest apparent.

Compared to Young Master Han, Gu Fei was a more straightforward person. Just as Young Master Han finished his statement, Gu Fei pulled out his sword. By the time Mr. Adrian expressed his shock and horror at the revelation, Gu Fei's sword was already sailing straight for him.

Although Gu Fei had confiscated the Fang of the Wolf King necklace from this NPC last time, the newly spawned Mr. Adrian was also someone who knew of the Werewolves' identity, so who knew if this NPC was hiding a similar item....

The average Werewolves were at level 70, so a shape-shifting Wolf King would basically be a level 70 Boss. Gu Fei was not about to let Mr. Adrian turn into one at all, which was why he decided to proactively strike Mr. Adrian first.

Adrian was still the same opponent as he was before; it was just a pity for him that Gu Fei was already ten levels higher and wearing top-of-the-class equipment since the last time they had faced each other. Just Gu Fei casting Twin Incineration twice was enough to burn Adrian into a bald old man. Adrian was totally suppressed by

Gu Fei, and the two men's fight wrecked havoc through the entire house.

Young Master Han had actually pulled out his holy stave to assist Gu Fei at the first opportunity, but the scene unfolding before him had him stuffing it back inside his dimensional pocket, instead. He then used his hand to navigate around the mansion as if he were blind. Stumbling on a wall where a meticulously drawn oil painting hung, he sighed with emotion. "Parallel World's design is really very detailed; even this oil painting looks intricate. Miles, come over here and take a look!"

"Scram!" Gu Fei chided as he viciously gave Adrian another slash.

Young Master Han lost any sense of novelty after touring the place once. Moving a stool to a corner of the mansion, he opened a bottle of liquor and began enjoying his beverage of choice while occasionally praising Gu Fei's skill. Naturally, Young Master Han did not forget to pester Gu Fei about hurrying up.

Gu Fei's fighting spirit soared when he imagined Mr. Adrian to be Young Master Han, endlessly hacking away at the poor NPC before him....

As the NPC was about to lose the fight, Mr. Adrian did exactly what he had done back then: He groveled before Gu Fei and begged for his life. He piteously claimed that Gu Fei was unknowingly aiding the Werewolves' objective to annihilate the human race and tempted the latter of obtaining all his fortune if he just let him go. Sadly, he was still facing the same opponent as before. Gu Fei was unmoved by his attempt at bargaining for his life and decisively slashed on.

However, what happened next was just beyond Gu Fei's realm of expectations.

Just as Gu Fei was thinking that Mr. Adrian would be finished with a few more slashes with the latter's movement becoming more sluggish, as if he had given up all hope and was merely

waiting for his death, the NPC seemed to have received Blessing of Strength from a fair goddess and acquired speed far beyond Gu Fei's imagination, managing to escape his attack range.

"F*CK!" Young Master Han, who had been leisurely drinking and watching the fight, quickly stood up, smashing his bottle in the process. Contrary to expectation, Mr. Adrian did not head for the door but dove straight toward the window, instead.

"The window!" Young Master Han fired off this message on the mercenary channel, hoping for the two others outside to be able to stop him in time.

"Thunderbolt! Strike!" Gu Fei quickly completed his chant in response to Young Master Han's shout, using his last bit of mana for this one spell. A streak of lightning then conjured from the ceiling and came crashing onto Mr. Adrian's head.

The spells unleashed using Moonlit Nightfalls were far stronger than the average cuts made by Gu Fei. Predictably, that single bolt of lightning was enough to kill Mr. Adrian outright. Who knew that Mr. Adrian would possess the tenacity of a cockroach, though, and would continue to dash toward the window despite directly taking Gu Fei's Spell Damage? In the end, his legs still gave way before he made it to the window, losing that explosive strength he had demonstrated when he first attempted to flee.

Gu Fei darted right next to him, his wrist whirling as he delivered strike after strike onto Mr. Adrian. This was already the limit of what Gu Fei could do in the game right now. The spectator, Young Master Han, beside Gu Fei could only see purplish blurs of his sword and could not see the individual strikes he was currently making.

Mr. Adrian finally collapsed, just a step away from the window. He raised his arm high and stretched it toward the window, demonstrating his strong yearning for it. In the process of his fall, Mr. Adrian's palm landed on the window and pushed it open with

the last vestiges of his strength. Gu Fei and Young Master Han did not really mind this, only feeling that the animation for this NPC's death seemed quite tragic. In the next instant, they heard the sound of flapping wings as a grey shadow appeared out of nowhere and flew out the window before any of them could react.

"What was that?" Gu Fei rushed over to the side of the window. Young Master Han was not any slower than him. The two leaned their heads out of the window and watched as a grey object flew off into the distance.

"Pigeon!" Young Master Han once more quickly sent out a message on the mercenary channel

"This is way too difficult..." Royal God Call apologetically said. No matter how godly he was with a bow, there was just no way for him to take down a fast-moving target like that flying pigeon. Although he fired off an arrow with Homing Projectile, the inherent speed it possessed was nowhere near as fast as that of the bird.

"Did Mr. Adrian release that?" Gu Fei asked while gazing at the corpse of Mr. Adrian.

"I think so," Young Master Han replied.

This explained that last burst of energy Mr. Adrian had shown. That strength he had in reserve was not for him to escape but to fulfill his duty of releasing that pigeon, instead. That pigeon was evidently used to carry messages. Right now, none of them knew of that letter's content. As for how Mr. Adrian was able to store that bit of strength... There was no point in questioning the system's unreasonable logic that was at play here.

Sword Demon and Brother Assist were now right outside the window as well and they sighed in relief at the sight of Mr. Adrian's corpse, "It's over!" They then asked, "What just flew off?"

“It could be a homing pigeon for carrying messages.”

“What do you guys think is Mr. Adrian’s message about?”

“There are two possibilities here,” Young Master Han answered, “First is that it is a letter detrimental to the Werewolves, but I don’t think that is the case here. Although he’s been exposed by us, it’s not due to the Werewolves failing to follow his orders. Taking petty revenge like that before his death is just too illogical. Therefore, it must be the second possibility: a continuation of the quest at hand. Given what Mr. Adrian was blackmailing the Werewolves about, this is clearly an organization’s attempt at silencing the prisoner being escorted by Traversing Four Seas. This organization is clearly programmed to disrupt the Traversing Four Seas’ escort mission. Taking all these things into consideration, Mr. Adrian most likely sent that message to inform the next interloper that he had failed his task and to make preparations for stopping us!”

Chapter 306 - Mark of the Wolf

“So what you are saying is that if we have managed to stop that pigeon from flying off, it would be smooth sailing for the rest of the quest for Traversing Four Seas?” Brother Assist asked.

“Not necessarily. The difference between a prepared opponent and one that is not should only affects the next ordeal’s difficulty!” Young Master Han replied.

Everyone found his explanation to be plausible, and any discussion on this topic ceased as a result. This quest still belonged to Traversing Four Seas through and through; as a bunch of ‘mediocre’ mercenaries in terms of professionalism, none of Young Master’s Elite really cared whether the difficulty of Traversing Four Seas’ quest increased or not.

“So how are we going to resolve this matter now? Are we bringing Mr. Adrian’s corpse over to meet the Werewolves?” Gu Fei lowered his head to look at the NPC corpse that lay sprawled on the floor as if Mr. Adrian were just sleeping.

“I doubt that’s necessary. We’ll just inform the Werewolves, and the system will probably take care of the rest. But we can’t conclude this quest at the moment,” Young Master Han said, explaining, “If we talk to the Werewolves now, they’ll simply disperse, allowing Traversing Four Seas to smoothly continue the journey tomorrow. Since this quest isn’t showing on our quest log, we can’t prove to Traversing Four Seas that we are responsible for it.”

“Guess we’ll continue this tomorrow, then!” Gu Fei said.

“Yup. You can go log off now!” Young Master Han dismissed him.

Gu Fei went to inform June’s Rain of Mr. Adrian’s departure so that she could continue digging out a passage. June’s Rain happily resumed her work as Gu Fei returned to Yueye City and logged off.

Four hours later, Youthful Reflection and the other Traversing Four Seas members were released from prison. Naturally, the first thing they concerned themselves with was the progress of the quest. When they learned that Young Master's Elite had still intervened in the end, Youthful Reflection immediately contacted Young Master Han.

"Miles went ahead and did it. He logged off just a while ago, so I have no idea what happened. Guess we'll find out tomorrow!" Young Master Han replied.

"And that note?" Youthful Reflection inquired.

"You want it back now?"

"Of course."

Young Master Han did not tell him that the issue had already been resolved, so Youthful Reflection did not give up on his end. He remained convinced that they could complete the quest by themselves. His line of thought about the situation completely matched Young Master's Elite's, and he was adamant that Mr. Adrian was the manipulator, and the search for proof to expose him would come later.

After taking back the note from Young Master Han, Youthful Reflection quickly began interacting with Mr. Adrian. He repeatedly questioned the NPC about the letter as he searched through the mansion, keeping watch on the latter the whole time, but it turned out to be a fruitless endeavor. Youthful Reflection tried all sorts of methods that he could come up with, yet Mr. Adrian's reaction to this matter remained the same: He was absolutely clueless about it.

Mr. Adrian was not faking it, either. This was because the current Mr. Adrian was already the third iteration. The Mr. Adrian that had blackmailed the Werewolves in relation to Traversing Four Seas' guild quest was no longer alive. While the NPC before Youthful Reflection bore the same task and name and would

probably be the antagonist of a different quest, he was no longer relevant to Traversing Four Seas' current escort mission. It was only natural for the NPC to be clueless with regard to the matter.

Unfortunately, Youthful Reflection was completely unaware of this. He busied himself over this matter from dusk to dawn. Youthful Reflection was completely worn out, yet Mr. Adrian was still spiritedly oblivious to anything pertaining to his quest. Youthful Reflection could no longer deny that he had failed.

Perhaps, it was just as what everyone had said before; the quest was already assigned to Gu Fei, so only he could accomplish it. If only Youthful Reflection knew that the reason he had made no progress at all was that this stage of the quest that he was attempting to advance had already been completed.

Youthful Reflection placing all his hopes on to Gu Fei was exactly what Young Master Han was after. Everything else that followed from there was really simple. Young Master Han did not even have to negotiate with Traversing Four Seas further. As long as the matter was settled before the guild's eyes, Traversing Four Seas would naturally pay the expected remuneration. After all, Oathless Sword and the rest knew how they should act in such situations.

For the whole day of the following day, the over seven hundred members of Traversing Four Seas blankly waited for the great Gu Fei to come online at 7 P.M.

Without wasting any time or words, Gu Fei quickly took the road to the Werewolves before the rest of the players set forth. Indeed, once Gu Fei informed them that he had taken care of Mr. Adrian, the Werewolves readily packed their things up and happily made their way back to Yeguang Village. Gu Fei waited eagerly for the hulking figure of the Werewolf Wally, who walked over without shifting to his human form, to hand him some sort of reward. He patted Gu Fei's shoulder with his humongous paw as he howled. Sadly, Gu Fei could not understand wolf language. Wally shifted back to his human form and solemnly expressed his message to Gu

Fei once more, “We will forever remember your kindness.”

“Take care!” Gu Fei waved to the Werewolves.

“Please accept our gift.” Wally took something out from his pocket. The eyes of Gu Fei, who was not usually passionate about in-game equipment, could not help but light up when he saw this. This was the same NPC who had given him his Moonlit Nightfalls last time! Although he did not put much value to equipment, it was undeniable that Gu Fei had only made such a torrential impact in Parallel World all thanks to his Moonlit Nightfalls. Surely, anything the Werewolves gifted would be top grade.

As he was thinking of this, Wally presented him his quest reward.

It was a belt. To be precise, it was an exceptionally gross-looking belt. A wolf’s head was right where the buckle should be. Ignoring how fierce the wolf’s head looked, the reason he found the belt very gross was that the half-agape wolf’s maw was made to have a salivating look. The wolf head’s fierce appearance was practically ruined by this. No matter how cold or fierce its gaze was, it felt off the longer anyone looked at it. Only one word crossed Gu Fei’s mind: lecherous¹....

“Is this belt a joke?” Gu Fei muttered as he took it in his hand.

Mark of the Wolf.

Besides the usual defense and increase in inventory space that the average belts provided, Mark of the Wolf also had a special trait: Werewolf’s regeneration. Imbued with the unyielding vitality inherent to Werewolves, the user recovered 1% of maximum HP every second.

Gu Fei was speechless. This was another item related to HP, yet all this while, what he truly needed was something to supplement his mana.

Although Gu Fei did not find the item ideal, it was still

undoubtedly top grade; just the belt being purple tier proved this much. Comparing the ‘Werewolf’s regeneration’ trait with that of a Knight’s Blessing of Health was where the value of the item really shone.

A Knight’s Blessing of Health could also regenerate a player’s HP, yet it was only able to recover once every five seconds at a fixed numerical value that was not percentage-based.

On the current market, it was common to find equipment that increased maximum HP and mana, but traits that granted regeneration were rare. No potion that could recover players’ HP or mana during combat existed in Parallel World as of date, so the preciousness of this belt was plain to see. If a Guardian were to receive this belt instead, he or she would most likely celebrate the good fortune for three days and nights. Since Gu Fei was the one who had received it, all he did was look at the simple leather belt he currently had on and hesitate over replacing it.

Mark of the Wolf was truly better than the leather belt he had on even in terms of basic stats, but the problem was the former’s design... Gu Fei looked at the wolf head ‘buckle’ once more.

Gross! It’s too gross.

There’s no way I’m letting it see the light of day... With this thought in mind, Gu Fei decisively stuffed Mark of the Wolf under his robe.

The way he wore Mark of the Wolf would not affect its trait usage or function, except... A Mage’s robe needed a belt to properly show off its beauty. With the belt worn on the inside, the robe hung limply on his body, making him look like aluminum can. Gu Fei was absolutely unaware how he looked, though. After bidding the Werewolves farewell, he simply stood by the roadside and waited for the other players from Yunduan City to come by.

He had already sent out a message informing Traversing Four Seas just then that the crisis had been averted.

Soon, the expedition arrived, with Oathless Sword, Youthful Reflection, and Gale Force taking the lead. Although they were rather dissatisfied, they were still grateful for Gu Fei's intervention in alleviating the quandary that they had found themselves in. The three men then carefully pondered on the mystery behind Gu Fei's appearance before continuing to lead everyone forward.

The mercenary groups were mostly hanging out at the back of the expedition, and Young Master's Elite was often trailing far behind. As such, Gu Fei suffered all the players' looks and stares. From the general understanding of these players, there was only one explanation for the Mage's current appearance: he was dressed too shabbily.

This lasted until Sakurazaka Moony and his Great Hunting mercenary group came by. They were rather familiar with Gu Fei, so they could not help but be surprised at Gu Fei's unkempt appearance. Finally, Fireball came right up to Gu Fei and whispered, "Drunk bro, you gotta buckle up properly after you're done with your business."

"What are you talking about?" Gu Fei asked, nonplussed.

Fireball's eyes looked far more obscene than the werewolf buckle, "He he... Playing in the fields, eh? That's the Drunk bro I know... Did you lose your belt after doing the deed? I've got a spare on me; why don't you take it and buckle up?"

"What nonsense are you spouting?!" Gu Fei heavily dropped his fist onto Fireball's head, finally realizing what the idiot was thinking, "I have a belt on; it's inside!" Gu Fei lifted his mage robe to show him the Mark of the Wolf within.

"This... Why did you fasten it on the inside?" Fireball asked, perplexed.

"It's too ugly," Gu Fei replied.

"Not at all! It's really cool-looking. I like it loads!" Fireball patted

that wolf's head on the buckle as he expressed his approval of it.

Gu Fei was speechless. In terms of their nature, the wolf's head and Fireball were indeed very compatible with each other.

"But Drunk bro," Fireball continued speaking, "This isn't good. A mage robe looks really ugly if you fasten that belt on the inside."

"That can't be helped, though. It'd look really obscene to have this belt shown in broad daylight," Gu Fei reasoned.

"You currently look as if you're wearing an extra long nightgown. Isn't that obscene, as well?" Fireball asked.

Gu Fei shuddered at that thought.

"If you want to have the belt fasten on the inside, you'll have to wear your robe like this," Fireball unfastened his belt and fastened it on the inside. He then unbuttoned his robe and pulled it open to the side before placing a hand on his hips, half-cocking his head, and slightly arching his back to strike a pose. "With a myriad of styles, this is a Mage's best weapon when it comes to courting chicks!"

Chapter 307 - Baishi City

“See what I did there?” Fireball maintained his pose as he asked Gu Fei this.

Gu Fei was totally speechless.

“This only works for this particular style of robe, though. Such coat-style mage robe with buttons isn’t easy to find, you know?” Fireball bragged. Checking Gu Fei’s robe, he exclaimed, “Turns out Drunk bro’s mage robe has a similar style, too! That makes things simpler!” Fireball unbuttoned the front of Gu Fei’s mage robe for him before taking several steps backward to examine his handiwork. In the end, he shook his head with remorse, “Drunk bro, your mage robe is really outstanding but your inner shirt is just too drab. I know a player who picked up the Tailor crafting profession with decent proficiency; he’s already able to create inner shirts and such. He’s actually a tailor in reality, so he’s truly a professional in that field. Look at what I’m wearing.” Fireball approached Gu Fei once more and showed him his undershirt, “See this? It’s a casual tee! This isn’t an article of clothes that players can learn to sew in-game without actually knowing how to do so in reality!”

Gu Fei was still at a loss for words.

“Unfortunately, my man is currently in Yunduan City. But don’t worry; I’ll bring you to meet him when we get back. With my introduction, I’m sure you’ll get 30% off of his products. Relax Drunk bro, I’ll take care of this for you.” Fireball returned to his mercenary group after he had said all this, leaving Gu Fei standing by the roadside like an idiot. This lasted until the five men of Young Master’s Elite came by to pick him up.

“So how was it? What reward did the Werewolves give you?” they asked.

Gu Fei took off Mark of the Wolf and showed it to them. He then

adjusted his robe properly and fastened his original leather belt.

“WOW!” A string of exclamations sounded as the men passed Mark of the Wolf among them.

Young Master Han was the last one to take it in hand. Tossing it back to Gu Fei, he asked, “Is this quest for Traversing Four Seas or for you? We haven’t been on this expedition for long, yet you’ve already gotten so much phat lootz.”

Gu Fei shrugged his shoulders as he stuffed the belt inside his dimensional pocket.

“You’re not using it?” War Without Wounds asked with a clear glint in his eyes. Given how casual Gu Fei treated the game, getting him to gift the items he did not need was easy.

Easily figuring out War Without Wounds’ intention, everyone eyed him with disdain, “That expression on your face makes you look like a real cheapskate.”

Gu Fei commented, “The belt is actually pretty good... It’s just that the design is ugly.”

“No way! It’s really cool-looking!” Royal God Call and War Without Wounds disagreed. These two were the obscene sort, after all. War Without Wounds mentally slapped his mouth when he said that. It’s rare for Miles to dislike something, so why am I trying to convince him otherwise?!

“The design isn’t the issue here!” Brother Assist said to Gu Fei, “Players who are skilled in the Tailor crafting profession should be able to alter its look according to your liking. Of course, those who are unskilled will only make it look worse, so it is better to find someone who knows how to design clothes even in reality. I know a person in Yunduan City who is a proficient Tailor, and he happens to be a skilled tailor in reality. Look at what I’m currently wearing; it’s something he has specially tailored for me. I’ll introduce you to this guy once we return to Yunduan City. I’m sure

he'll give you a 30% discount on my account. Don't worry; leave this matter to me."

Gu Fei did not know whether to laugh or cry when he heard this. Looking Brother Assist squarely in the face, he asked, "Do you know Fireball?" Following this, Gu Fei lashed out his sword to cleave the newly formed Fireball. This was one disadvantage of being a Mage; as long as what a Mage spoke contained the words for an incantation, the spell would instantly be cast. Any time any two Mages conversed about the spells they knew, the scene would always blaze in flames, with countless balls of fire surrounding their frames, fire wheels rotating above their heads, or raging infernos growing in intensity from beneath their feet. Fireball, Repeating Fireball, and such would appear before them, looking glorious and dangerous.

Brother Assist did not know that a player had the IGN 'Fireball', so he failed to comprehend Gu Fei's meaning. Looking at Gu Fei's departing back, Brother Assist felt fear grip his heart as he asked the other four men, "Was he threatening me?"

War Without Wounds solemnly patted his arm, "You better be careful."

Brother Assist's legs wobbled.

The throng of players continued on their journey. An expansive road and vast plains ahead reassured them of their safety from ambushers. However, this sort of uninterrupted journey was the most boring. Dully moving forward for three hours, they finally saw the outline of another city in the horizon.

Oathless Sword took out the map that the system had specifically issued for this guild quest and checked their current coordinates, "Ahead is Baishi City."

Everyone sighed in relief. After leaving Yueye City's Werewolves behind, they did not come across any other dangerous situation. As such, the Werewolves remained everyone's number one

conversation topic along the way. Only a few of these players had actually seen the Werewolves, as mostly Young Master's Elite had had dealings with them. Therefore, these players barely experienced anything during their travel from Yueye City to Baishi City.

The players from Yunduan City could already spot several players hailing from Baishi City. In comparison, their army numbering over a thousand easily caught the locals' eyes, and plenty of the locals stopped what they were doing to watch their expedition advance onward.

"Take care and maintain a low profile here!" Those who had suffered losses in Yueye City reminded their companions and even themselves of this. Combat was essentially the main allure in MMOs, so it was very easy to nurture a reckless and wild mentality like what was prevalent in Yueye City. These players were worried that players from Baishi City would have the same character here.

In contrast, Oathless Sword and the rest of Traversing Four Seas were far more relaxed here. They had made ample preparations before coming here and had checked the forums of Baishi City. Baishi City was the typical peaceful city and was nothing like the chaotic Yueye City.

Everyone began to ease up when the expedition managed to make its way into the city without trouble. The mercenaries headed straight to the spawn points to register their characters, while all the Traversing Four Seas' members accompanied Oathless Sword in delivering the prisoner to Baishi City's prison for safekeeping. Most of them proceeded to log off after.

Although they had no direct confrontations with Yueye City's players, three Traversing Four Seas' members still regrettably lost their lives while grinding and questing, largely due to their unfamiliarity with the local quests' difficulty and monsters' respawn rate. While their return to Yunduan City was not particularly troublesome, the system still tagged their guild quest

as failed and subsequently removed it from their quest log.

The players of Traversing Four Seas only had one life for this guild quest. That was why when they arrived at Baishi City, no one dared to take any chances and immediately logged off at the safe zones.

The six men of Young Master's Elite were sneakier here. As they neared Baishi City, they began searching through the marching troops for a particular player: Silver Moon.

According to Dusky Cloud's plan, his group would only move to repeatedly kill Silver Moon once he registered his character's spawn point to Baishi City. While Dusky Cloud did not ask for their help on the matter, the six men did not really mind joining in on the fun. There was no love lost between Silver Moon and them, after all.

Silver Moon was naturally surrounded by his men from Silver Moon mercenary group. Gu Fei and company followed behind them from quite the distance, even as they searched for traces of Dusky Cloud and his men.

Since Yunduan City's players had spent another night in Yueye City, Dusky Cloud had managed to bring a bunch of hitmen with him to Baishi City ahead. Neighboring cities often had quests that required players to go back and forth between them, just like the quest that had brought June's Rain to Yueye City. Although most people were too lazy to bother with this sort of quests, there was no lack of Yueye City players who would take up such quests. These players who had obtained quests requiring them to go to Baishi City naturally knew of the way there.

Gu Fei and company watched Silver Moon and his group walk past an intersection. The six men continued to trail after them while laughing inside. Dusky Cloud and his men seemed to already be in position and had probably assigned men to ambush Silver Moon at the spawn point for Knights as well. They were probably

not making a move on Silver Moon because they were waiting for him to register his character in Baishi City.

This was the first time that Silver Moon and his men's party of over thirty came to Baishi City. As they made their way to the city, they found out that the nearest spawn point was the Thieves' Union. Players only needed to speak with the NPC in charge of registration by a safe zone and they would successfully transfer their spawn location over. Of course, there was a fee for this service as well. The NPCs in Parallel World were like a host of machines that ate coins, much to the loathing of the players.

Silver Moon did not rush to log off after registering his character over. Leaving the spawn point, Silver Moon was not particularly surprised to see Gu Fei and the rest of Young Master's Elite enter the Thieves' Union after him. Most players from Yunduan City that had inquired about the spawn points headed to the Thieves' Union as well, with hundreds of people streaming into the place at their pace.

The eyes of both parties met momentarily. Despite knowing that the other party had already seen through his duplicitous act, Silver Moon still persisted with his hypocritical ways and squeezed a smile to them. Young Master Han smiled back at him as Gu Fei and Sword Demon maintained a poker face. Brother Assist looked somewhat worried. Meanwhile, War Without Wounds and Royal God Call snickered as they brushed past Silver Moon. The two darted over to the NPC and registered their characters before hurrying back to watch the fun.

"They are about leave!" The two of them were extremely elated. Dusky Cloud must have already set up his formation over by this spawn point's entrance, unleashing a concerted attack that would utterly devastate Silver Moon the moment he stepped out. Everyone was just uncertain how many men Dusky Cloud had actually brought for this; would there be all four thousand of them in Baishi City? How spectacular would it look if all four thousand

players simultaneously unleashed attacks! Who knew when any players from Yunduan City would witness such a grand show of force like this?

As these two men anxiously waited for this, Silver Moon and his men finally took their final step out of the spawn point. Royal God Call excitedly clenched his fists, “It’s coming!”

In the end... The entrance to the Thieves’ Union remained devoid of any sweeping changes to transform it into a fighting field. Besides players making their way in and out of this safe zone, nothing else happened.

“Eh?! What’s happening?! Did Old Cloud and company not make it?” The two men were perplexed. Gu Fei and the others, who had just finished registering their characters, were equally at a loss.

Chapter 308 - Dusky Cloud, the Combat Veteran

Silver Moon and his men freely walked about in Baishi City, pointing and looking around as though they were tourists on a vacation. Gu Fei was supposed to log off earlier, but his desire to witness Silver Moon being stripped off his equipment had him staying online just a little longer.

Even now, he was still sneakily following Silver Moon, but that ambush he had been waiting for never came to be. The men of Young Master's Elite could no longer stand it and were about to contact Dusky Cloud when they spotted the man's head poking out from a certain street corner. Dusky Cloud checked Silver Moon's heading direction, turned his head toward the six men, and waved his hand in greeting.

No longer needing to send out a message, the six men quickly went to him. "Why haven't you made a move yet?" They were a lot more impatient than Dusky Cloud, it seemed.

"It's too troublesome," Dusky Cloud explained.

"What do you mean?"

"Look," Dusky Cloud pointed at the road leading toward the Thieves' Union. "They are all players from Yunduan City." Indeed, just as what he had said, the mercenaries from Yunduan City that had recently arrived to Baishi City slowly meandered down this street before heading over to the Thieves' Union to register their characters. Basically, the whole lane was filled with Yunduan City's players. "It won't be good to strike now!" Dusky Cloud concluded.

"How many men have you brought with you?" Royal God Call asked.

Dusky Cloud glanced backward, "Not a lot. Just about three

hundred!"

"Ahhh..." Royal God Call felt disappointed, "Why so few? Doesn't the Ten Guild Alliance have over four thousand members?"

"We're just trying to take care of Silver Moon; is there even a need for more?" Dusky Cloud asked back. Actually, Dusky Cloud was tempted to bring all four thousand of his men to surround Silver Moon, just so he could see the frightened look on his face, but it had really been a while since the guild war, and not many of their members held deep grudge against Silver Moon. In fact, most of the Ten Guild Alliance did not have an existing enmity with him, so they were quite unwilling to dedicate in-game time going over to another city in pursuit of Silver Moon. Because of this, Dusky Cloud did not force them all to partake in this mission and just contented himself with those who volunteered for it.

"You see, if you brought all four thousand here, you wouldn't even need to worry about this whole street of Yunduan City players," Royal God Call commented.

"Bro, you're rather vicious... Why don't you come over to Yueye City to expand?!" Dusky Cloud exclaimed.

"You're the only one who's vicious here!" Gu Fei countered, "What he meant is that no one would dare lend Silver Moon a hand if they were to see four thousand men lying in wait for him. Were you actually thinking of eliminating everyone all at once?"

Dusky Cloud had indeed misunderstood Royal God Call's comment, and what Gu Fei had said was precisely Yueye City's de facto overlord had in his extremist mind.

"Actually, although everyone is from the same city, that doesn't guarantee that we will assist a fellow Yunduan City player if a fight breaks out," Brother Assist said.

"That's true. While we were all hired for this mission, we don't

really know one another before this. Plenty of conflicts occur between mercenaries in our line of work, so I don't think anyone would be willing to assist him," War Without Wounds concurred.

"Why don't you try feigning an attack to see how these people would react before coming up with a plan accordingly?" Brother Assist suggested.

The six men surrounded Dusky Cloud and gave him suggestions all for the sake of seeing Silver Moon's demise a little faster. They absolutely did not intend to spend the entire night following Dusky Cloud around as he looked for an opportunity to strike.

"In that case—" Dusky Cloud finally succumbed to the six men's instigations and was just about to probe the surrounding players' stance on the matter with an attack when a large group of men by the intersection behind them emerged. Silver Moon warmly greeted this approaching group of men and, soon after, he and his men joined them.

Now, not even the full force that Dusky Cloud had brought with him would be able to match up with the hundreds of men currently walking with Silver Moon.

"Oathless Sword?" The six men of Young Master's Elite exchanged puzzled looks.

"When did they begin working together? They look real chummy with one another now," Brother Assist said.

"I can't find information of this on the guild channel," The spy Royal God Call reported.

"It's not really surprising," Young Master Han remarked, explaining, "Silver Moon's party-wide skill plays a crucial role in large-scale fights; it would be even more surprising if Oathless Sword didn't try to pull him over to his side. Considering Silver Moon's hypocritical ways, and his ability to falsely make agreements without a hint of sincerity even with his enemies, he'd

surely not pass up this chance to build a strong relationship with such a powerful entity like Traversing Four Seas. The way I see it, there's a huge possibility of him becoming the fourth core member of Traversing Four Seas by the time we return to Yunduan City."

"Can he still make it back to Yunduan City, though?" The men looked at Dusky Cloud when they asked this.

Dusky Cloud wavered, "We'll have to find the right opportunity. We are at a really disadvantageous position as things stand right now. Since Silver Moon is with the employer for this mission, wouldn't everyone here lend a hand if we were to initiate an attack now?"

The six men did not answer him, as what he had just said was apparent. If Dusky Cloud were to act now, Oathless Sword would surely intervene. Since it would involve Traversing Four Seas, the various mercenary groups in the area would surely move to help. With only three hundred men on Dusky Cloud's side in this unfamiliar territory, was there even a possibility of success for them if they clashed against Yunduan City's players?

Just because Yueye City's players were passionate about PvPing did not mean that they were brain-dead. The combat veteran Dusky Cloud's assessment of the opposing party's strength was in fact more accurate than Young Master's Elite's. Although he was unrestrained and pompous at times, Dusky Cloud would still not dare to strike like this, knowing how slim their chance of success was in this scenario. He was not stupid enough to fight a losing battle, after all.

Thus, under their unwilling gazes, Silver Moon leisurely walked further away with Traversing Four Seas in tow...

"Are we letting him go just like that?" The men of Young Master's Elite felt rather dissatisfied.

"I'll send some bros he's unfamiliar with to follow him," Dusky Cloud assured them, explaining, "I'll stop tailing him here. If

Silver Moon turns around, he may discover me.”

“In that case... We’ll go do our things. Contact us if you make any progress!” the six men said.

“Of course. Go ahead and do your businesses. I’ll make sure to call you guys if anything exciting happens,” Dusky Cloud chuckled.

Young Master’s Elite did not promise to assist Dusky Cloud with the matter, nor did Dusky Cloud directly request Young Master’s Elite’s help. After all, Young Master’s Elite’s hands currently were tied with them being with the Yunduan City’s players in Baishi City. This was not a convenient time for them to settle old scores, as all of them were temporary comrades for this particular mission. It was already unprofessional of them to stay on the sidelines when they saw a comrade being hunted down; they would likely rub many people the wrong way if they were to assist the offending party in taking Silver Moon down.

As such, Dusky Cloud merely told them that he would let them know if anything exciting happened. Young Master’s Elite of course understood what he meant and nodded their heads in acquiescence.

Dusky Cloud went to set up his matter, while the six men went about their ways. The five men proceeded to tease Gu Fei, “Once you go offline, you won’t be able to see it if things unfold tonight!”

Gu Fei did not spend much time online, yet he was exceptionally skilled, his equipment was top-notch, and his level was not too far off from them... Such an anomaly in a game left these experts feeling rather disgruntled; they were looking forward to the day when Gu Fei would stay overnight, for that was the must-have quality of apex gamers!

However, Gu Fei merely shrugged his shoulders. “It’s fine if I can’t watch it happen. I’ll just slay him myself when I have time.” With that, he made his way toward the Thieves’ Union to log out.

In the end, Silver Moon spent the whole night grinding levels with Traversing Four Seas in one of Baishi City's grinding maps. The men Dusky Cloud had sent to keep an eye on Silver Moon ended up falling asleep while lying on the grass. It was already morning in reality and in-game when these men woke up; the group of players was still grinding before them, but it was obviously time for them to leave, as they were already showing signs of lethargy and extreme fatigue from staying online all night long. After taking care of the last wave of monsters, this group moved to return to the city.

"There's an opportunity!" The reconnaissance team that had slept through the night while doing the stakeout was still energetic when it informed Dusky Cloud of this.

"What's up?" Dusky Cloud's reply came fast, as this was an opportunity he had waited a whole night for.

"Seems like they are going to log off," the reconnaissance team reported.

This was indeed an opportunity. After an entire night of monster grinding, players would usually proceed to auction off their equipment to collate their earnings, store their coins in the Bank, tidy up their items in the warehouse, repair their equipment, or even head over to a tavern to drink a glass or two. Players would have difficulties gathering up again for any group activity during this time, which made it a prime opportunity for any enemies to strike.

"Continue to observe and report the coordinates." Dusky Cloud perked up when he heard their report and started gathering the comrades with him. Naturally, he was also feeling very tired after staying up all night.

"The target has returned to the city. He's together with his team, probably entering from the west gate," the reconnaissance team continued to report Silver Moon's movement.

“What’s the nearest log-off point from the west gate?” Dusky Cloud hurriedly asked.

His brothers-in-arms that had done the research of Baishi City’s layout replied, “The Archer Range.”

“Prepare an ambush by that log-off point and get ready to start a fight. Rendezvous over at the Knights’ Barracks, but leave some fresh faces along the streets from the west gate to the log-off point for Archers. Send some men over to the nearest taverns, warehouses, smithies, tailoring shops, grocery stores, fruit stands, bakeries, Master Appraiser, and clinics. Don’t forget the Bank, Auction House, and Trade Exchange platforms, too,” Dusky Cloud skillfully passed down these orders to his men.

“Boss, is there really a need for all that? I’m already following him right now!” someone from the reconnaissance team reasoned.

“It’s easy for you to watch him since our target is moving with a large group. Once they enter the city and these hundreds of men disperse, can you still keep track of Silver Moon? Everyone is tired after staying online overnight; all it takes is a momentary slip-up, and all our efforts will go down the drain,” Dusky Cloud replied.

“Mmm. You’ve got a point, Boss...” The reconnaissance team member was naturally ashamed to mention that he had been sleeping on the hill all this while, so he was pretty much invigorated right now.

Time passed as Dusky Cloud and his men were yawning while they prepared their ambush.

“Everyone, our target has entered the city,” the reconnaissance team reported.

“I’m keeping my eyes trained on the west gate; I’ll surely spot Silver Moon when he passes by!” Although he had deployed his men all over the city as a precaution, Dusky Cloud was still the most confident of his ability to spot Silver Moon. After all, Dusky

Cloud had rich experience when it came to PvP.

Chapter 309 - Murderous Intent Emanating in the Central Plaza

Just as Dusky Cloud and his men had expected, the large throng of players immediately went their separate ways upon entering Baishi City's west gate. Dusky Cloud felt anxious when he saw a majority of the players heading directly to the nearest log-off point, as he and his men would not have any chance to strike if Silver Moon decided to meld in with the going-offline crowd.

Good news quickly arrived with the high-spirited reconnaissance team member's report: "I've spotted Silver Moon!"

"Where is he headed to?" Dusky Cloud hurriedly asked.

"Seems to be in the warehouse," the member replied.

"Watch him closely, then. Wait till more of these people disperse. Are the preparations over by the Archer Range complete?" Dusky Cloud asked.

"Ready and waiting."

"Silver Moon has indeed left for the warehouse... but he's still in the company of many players, with some of them appearing to be Baishi City players. It may not be convenient to strike now," the member appropriately updated him about the situation.

"Just keep track of him for now. The rest of you, start populating the road from the warehouse by the west gate going to the Archer Range," Dusky Cloud commanded.

"Got it!"

"How many companions does Silver Moon have with him?" Dusky Cloud asked.

"There are about forty to fifty players heading to the warehouse with him," was the reply he got.

“That’s a sizeable amount...” Dusky Cloud pondered on aloud, “If they continue to stick together, I’m afraid we’ll be forced to wait for most of Traversing Four Seas players to log off before we can make a move.” Naturally, Dusky Cloud was not doing this because he wanted to give Traversing Four Seas face but because it would eat up time for them to deal with a handful of enemies. Although there were merely forty to fifty men on their end, they could not discount Silver Moon’s party-wide skill.

If they attacked while most of Traversing Four Seas’ players were still online, those men could easily turn back and assist Silver Moon in the fight, essentially wasting Dusky Cloud and his men’s effort of waiting for the whole night. Furthermore, their failure here would make their target be on guard for future attempts. It would not be easy to find another chance for this, given how shrewd Silver Moon was.

“We must take him down in one attack. This is something we cannot afford to f*ck up!” Dusky Cloud clenched his fists, “Those standing by the Archer Range, inform us after the players from Yunduan City log off.”

“Roger that.”

“Where has the leader of Traversing Four Seas gone to?” Dusky Cloud asked the reconnaissance team.

“We have no idea!” they replied.

“Everyone, besides those stalking our target, head over to the Archer Range. We will concentrate our firepower there for this one concerted strike,” Dusky Cloud commanded.

“Silver Moon has left the warehouse!” the reconnaissance team hurriedly reported.

“Is there any other players with him? Have the players from Yunduan City logged off yet?” Dusky Cloud quickly asked.

“Some have left. Silver Moon and a dozen or so players are

heading toward a different direction together. I'm tailing them now!"

"They're not heading toward the Archer Range?"

"Nope!"

"Send us the coordinates! Everyone, approach and act alone," Dusk Cloud hurriedly instructed. "Can you tell me where that b*st*rd is heading to?"

"I'm not too sure..." The reconnaissance team member could not answer this. This place was not Yueye City, and he was still unfamiliar with its layout, so he could not easily determine their target's destination.

"Don't panic!" Dusky Cloud told his comrades even as he tried to calm himself down.

"This should be Silver Moon's first time visiting this city," Dusky Cloud began to break down his thought process aloud, "We specially memorized Baishi City's layout because we wished to take him down here, but since he'll be staying here for one night, he doesn't have a reason to spend too much effort learning his way around this city. He'll likely depend on the pedestrians to navigate around here. When one of you sees him speak to someone, just ask that same person about his inquiry and we'll surely find out his destination."

"Boss can really divine the unknown; that guy is really talking to a passerby right now," the man happily exclaimed.

"Not bad, Old Cloud!" Celestial Pig was beside Dusky Cloud as he heavily patted his back, "You're pretty quick-witted."

"M*th*rf*ck*r, you may be a pig, but I sure am not!" Dusky Cloud mocked Celestial Pig as he started heading toward Silver Moon's current coordinates with several of his brothers-in-arms, silently waiting for more news.

"I've got it, boss!" the reconnaissance member announced in

elation, “Silver Moon and company are going to the Auction House!”

“Everyone, quickly gather to the Auction House!” Dusky Cloud ordered as he gleefully bragged to Celestial Pig, “I knew that b*st*rd won’t know his way around here.”

“But... Isn’t the Auction House supposed to be located at the central plaza just like in every in-game city? Could this be a trap?” Celestial Pig wondered.

“F*ck! Do you think you have the God’s eye view or something?! Could you find your way to the heart of a city if I were to throw you in a random corner of it? M*th*rf*ck*r, you’ve grown cowardly after being killed by Silver Moon so much that you now think everything he does is a trap! I spit on you!” Dusky Cloud harshly berated him.

Celestial Pig did not dare to comment on this. Out of Dusky Cloud’s comrades, Celestial Pig was known for his fear of Silver Moon. Back then, he had been unable to outwit or outplay Silver Moon. Having been bullied during Parallel World’s open beta left a knot in his heart.

Urged by Dusky Cloud to hurry, besides the players lying in wait by the Knights’ Barracks, the rest of the men headed straight for Baishi City’s central plaza to gather at the Auction House there.

Silver Moon and his band of brothers walked onward at a leisure pace, while Dusky Cloud’s troops followed behind stealthily. Some players with faster movement speed rushed ahead of Silver Moon. Even the Warriors and Priest job classes were not particularly slower than Silver Moon.

“Old Cloud, it might be hasty for us to act promptly, and he might escape us if our preparations are not completed in time. Why don’t we let him do his shopping first so we can use that time to set up outside?” someone suggested.

“Hmm... That’s not a bad idea. Quite a lot of Yunduan City’s players have gone offline, right?” Dusky Cloud asked.

“The players, who went to this spawn point for Archers, are already back in reality,” the players by the Archer Range reported.

“Have you seen their guild leader, that Warrior... uhm...” As his comrades did not know Oathless Sword, Dusky Cloud was wondering how to describe him when he heard someone over there reply, “Yeah. I saw him. He’s gone.”

“Eh, you recognize him?” Dusky Cloud found this perplexing.

“He he... there’s a long-winded Warrior who addressed everyone after arriving at the Archer Range. Anyone can instantly tell that he’s a guild leader!” the man explained.

“Oh...” Dusky Cloud mumbled. He was a guild leader himself, yet he had never addressed his men before logging off like Oathless Sword.

Shortly after, Dusky Cloud and his men arrived by the Auction House. They even arrived at it earlier than their target. Dusky Cloud was pleased to see some of his men pretending to nonchalantly wander about the plaza – feeling that they had done a wonderful job blending in. Naturally, those people that Silver Moon might recognize, such as Dusky Cloud, Celestial Pig, and a few others, hid themselves from plain sight along the street. Dusky Cloud no longer needed to position up his men when he saw this. They had men crawling on every street leading to the Auction House, so once Silver Moon was done with his business in the Auction House, he would instantly be surrounded. Nothing short of divine intervention could grant him escape now.

“When is Silver Moon reaching this location? I think now is the time—” Before Dusky Cloud could key in these words, he caught sight of a silvery glint before him as a Knight clad in shiny, full-body armor swaggered right past his eyes. Silver Moon and his mercenary members were heading toward the Auction House.

F*ck! Look at how flagrant and audacious you are; I'll have you crying in a moment! Dusky Cloud cursed inside as he informed his men: "Silver Moon has already arrived. Those who aren't here yet better put your m*th*rf*ck*ng backs into it."

This seemingly simple command was actually very difficult for Dusky Cloud to relay over. This was because the players with him all hailed from ten different guilds. Although they were all in the same alliance, the system did not provide them a channel of sort to communicate with one another. This meant that Dusky Cloud would have to relay his order to these men from the other nine guilds around him first before it could be disseminated to the respective members, and any response that they might get in return would have to be sent over to these nine as well.

This was indeed a complicated setup, but since they had been working in such a format for so long, everyone was already used to it.

At the moment, this air of trepidation was not just being experienced by these three hundred odd men in Baishi City; the Ten Guild Alliance's players back in Yueye City were also in a similar state, and they made a conscious effort to maintaining a clean channel, knowing that their comrades were at the critical stage of their hunt in Baishi City, and quietly waited for further news.

Silver Moon, who was now in a group of only twelve men, made his way across the plaza and into the Auction House. The men from the Ten Guild Alliance made eye contact with one another without revealing themselves in the slightest.

Some players had yet to reach the area, and Dusky Cloud saw it fit to hurry them along while he arranged those present to collapse on to Silver Moon when he exited the Auction House. He then assigned a few Thieves in Stealth mode outside the Auction House to block Silver Moon as soon as he stepped out. The Auction House was a safe zone in itself, which meant that PvPing was impossible

inside, so they could not let Silver Moon to seek sanctuary inside it once they launched their attacks.

Had Gu Fei been in the central plaza at this moment, he would have surely been able to sense the palpable killing intent pervading the air.

Dusky Cloud felt a twinge of regret inside him that Young Master's Elite's was currently not present to witness the spectacular sight of them ganking Silver Moon.

"Everyone, Silver Moon is about to come out!" the man who followed Silver Moon's group inside the Auction House reported this.

Just as this message arrived, the Auction House's door swung open and Silver Moon and company walked out in high spirits, his expression clearly showing that he had made quite the haul.

Heh... Let me show you what a real haul is! Dusky Cloud was amusedly thinking of this when, in the next moment, the materialization and subsequent descent of Descending Wheel of Flames right above Silver Moon's head gave him a thorough shock.

"M*TH*RF*CK*R! Whose hands slipped?!" Dusky Cloud was infuriated. The plan was to wait until Silver Moon was a good distance away from the Auction House before the members milling about in the central plaza would come forward and surround him. The players on the streets would follow and create an even larger encirclement, forming an inner and outer circle to completely cut off Silver Moon's path of escape.

The flame wheel indeed hit Silver Moon, but it also hit the nearby Thieves in Stealth.

Taking that spell head on and discovering the several Thieves around, Silver Moon quickly realized what was going on. Turning on his heel, he ran toward the Auction House. The Thieves strove to catch up to Silver Moon and stop him from entering the safe

zone.

Silver Moon and his men were all outside by now, but the Auction House's door remained wide open and, from it, a bunch of Warriors rushed out with murder in their minds. Since the Thieves did not recognize any of them, they hastily raised their arms to resist their charge. Unfortunately, these Thieves had already received damage from that flame wheel before, so they were unable to endure the rushing Warriors' assault.

Dusky Cloud did not bother to find the culprit for that misfire and instead led his men to join the fray while they still had the chance. This was when the doors of the Bank, Trade Exchange, and nearby establishments burst open with hordes of players streaming out of them.

"What's going on?!" Dusky Cloud was at a complete loss right now.

"F*CK! That's Blue Ease!" Celestial Pig bellowed.

Dusky Cloud turned to follow his voice, spotting a Mage in liquid, blue robe. It was indeed the erstwhile vice guild leader of the disbanded Past Deeds Guild: Blue Ease.

"F*cking h*ll! Was this really a trap?!" Dusky Cloud looked around and saw numerous players rushing out of the buildings around them. The Bank, Trade Exchange, et cetera were edifices capable of holding hundreds or even thousands of players. It was now clear where that flame wheel from before had come; by the looks of things, the Mage who had cast that spell was not from his men.

Given his men's rich experience PvPing, Dusky Cloud was already considering that, as it was really unlikely for them to make such a rookie mistake.

"Let's retreat!" Celestial Pig suggested in his agitation. Once he heard Silver Moon entrapping them, Celestial Pig broke out in a

bout of cold sweat.

“F*ck retreating, you coward! That’s no way someone who hangs out with proper m*th*rf*ck*rs like us should act! Out of all the four thousand four hundred eighty-seven members of the Ten Guild Alliance, you’re the most cowardly at times like this!” Dusky Cloud gave Celestial Pig an earful before pulling out his dagger and hurtling it toward Blue Ease.

This was the core characteristic of Yueye City’s players. They would discuss plan, set up ambushes, and even ensnare their enemies before a fight... But once the fighting began, they would just recklessly charge head on to the enemies with this mantra in mind: Show no mercy and kill them all! When they held the upper hand, they showed no mercy; if they were at a disadvantage, they would grit their teeth and kill as many as they could without mercy as well.

Never retreating, and never backing down... Dusky Cloud had always believed this to be the very essence of a man.

“F*CK IT! LET’S GO ALL OUT!” Dusky Cloud’s admonishment seemed to have awakened Celestial Pig’s inner fire. Wielding his battleaxe, he followed Dusky Cloud into the fray.

Chapter 310 - The Enemy of My Enemy

The men that Dusky Cloud had brought with him for this operation were extremely baffled by the emergence of enemies from the nearby buildings. Similarly, those players were shocked by their sudden appearance in the central plaza and from the adjoining streets.

The gazes of the people on both sides went straight to their respective bosses. This was when Dusky Cloud's men followed the trajectory he was diving toward to and identified the recipient of his devoted attention. "F*ck! It's Blue Ease!"

On the opposing party's end, Blue Ease also recognized the Thief in Fleetfoot mode that was hurtling toward him and roared, "D*mn! It's Dusky Cloud!"

However, the person who was the loudest in this location right now was Silver Moon. Raising the glowing golden sword in the air, Silver Moon activated the party-wide skill of King's Command as he yelled, "Brothers, to arms!"

Both parties quickly entered melee engagement.

The fact that Dusky Cloud and his men had fallen for Silver Moon's scheme again infuriated them so much. As such, their battlecry was more thunderous, promising pain on their foes as they strove to foil their ploy even if it meant their own ruin.

Blue Ease was on the warpath when he heard Silver Moon's roar. Eyes turning red, Blue East wielded his weapon and launched a vigorous counterattack on Dusky Cloud.

Numerous white lights burst forth from the central plaza in this first clash. Dusky Cloud's men had rich experience in group fights; naturally, Blue Ease was not too far off from them, being a former resident of the blood-soaked city of Yueye. All these players hailing from Yueye City were truly well-versed in concentrating their

firepower to kill as many enemies as they could.

The number of casualties was a reflection of either side's manpower, level of teamwork, choice of target, and so on. Simply put, this was a battle of efficiency. While the logic behind all this sounded simple, utilizing such a stratagem required a deep understanding of warfare. This sort of head-on clashes were taxing on the Priests, to say the least, as it needed them to possess superb healing skills and a strong grasp of tactics that could bring victory to their side. Therefore, those Priests with average skills would soon be revealed when they discover their comrades dying on them, unable to provide any significant assistance in the least.

Highly skilled Priests were truly few and far between, so it was hardly surprising that almost all the Priests on both sides were hard-pressed to accomplish their tasks. Since the Priests were barely up to par, the death toll on both sides quickly rose in just these two rounds of fighting.

Being a Mage, Blue Ease predictably did not rush to the forefront of this clash. Although Dusky Cloud was striving to pounce on him, Blue Ease was not foolish enough to be swayed by his action into duking it out with the commander of the opposing side.

Dusky Cloud did not forget his real objective for this assault, yelling to his men as he fought on, "Keep your eyes peeled for Silver Moon! Immediately strike if the opportunity presents itself!"

Dusky Cloud did not instruct his men to launch the first strike on to their target because he had seen Silver Moon unleash the King's Command skill. In such fights where efficiency was the key, it was imperative to avoid initiating the attack on the enemies. Although they were here to kill Silver Moon, Dusky Cloud knew that attempting to attack the latter at this moment might very well cost him the lives of all his men and to fail the operation, instead.

Blue Ease was evidently stunned when he heard Dusky Cloud's order and he hurriedly squeezed himself out from the Mages'

ranks, yelling, “Stop m*th*rf*ck*ng fighting! We’re here to kill Silver Moon, too!”

“What?!” Dusky Cloud was stunned by Blue Ease’s words, but since Silver Moon was known for his scheming nature, he was unsure of the veracity of Blue Ease’s claim. Fortunately, Blue Ease was decisive enough and immediately issued this command to his men, “Everyone, stop your attacks!”

Since Blue Ease decisively withdrew from the fight and had his men stand down, Dusky Cloud no longer held suspicion regarding his claim and quickly ordered his men to follow suit. Almost instantly, only the sounds of sporadic fights could be heard from the fighting field, and those soon stopped as well. Before either side could make sense of things further, Dusky Cloud slapped his forehead in realization, “M*th*rf*cker! Where is Silver Moon?!”

This one statement prompted everyone to search for their target, yet not one of them spotted even a lick of shadow of Silver Moon and his men.

“G*dd*mn! Did none of you see him?” Dusky Cloud and Blue Ease coincidentally bellowed the same thing at the same time.

Everyone looked at one another, nonplussed.

“M*TH*RF*CK*NG FIND HIM!” the two men shouted in unison again. Yelling the same thing twice had left an awkward aftertaste in the two men, causing them to eye each other rather discontentedly.

“We’ve lost them; no idea where they are right now!” The players who had run down the nearby streets in search of Silver Moon reported back.

“F*ck! That guy gave us the slip!” Blue Ease exhaled.

Dusky Cloud was no fool and he quickly realized why everything had gone south. Dusky Cloud and his men had assumed that Blue Ease and company were on Silver Moon’s side, but Blue Ease would

not have thought that Dusky Cloud and his men were lending Silver Moon a hand.

However, this misunderstanding started after Silver Moon's bellow of "Brother, to arms!"

That one shout had been extremely detrimental to either party. Dusky Cloud's side completely assumed that Silver Moon was calling for Blue Ease and his men. Blue Ease's side, meanwhile, did not actually think much of that shout, but when they saw Dusky Cloud and his men aggressively charging at them, they promptly assumed that Silver Moon and Dusky Cloud's team had joined forces against him, leaving Blue Ease and his men with no choice but to ruthlessly counterattack.

Furthermore, the shrewd Silver Moon was familiar with how either party fought. He knew that both sides would employ blitzkrieg tactic to quickly wrap up the fight, which would naturally avoid directly engaging his teammates who were under the effect of King's Command. Since both parties were enemies with Silver Moon, they had consciously given him a wide berth. Given how their battle tactics had them precisely targeting enemies which required their utmost concentration and how no one expected Silver Moon to flee, by the time both sides wised up to the fact that they had been had, Silver Moon had already made his successful getaway.

"You sshl*s, what the actual f*ck?!" Dusky Cloud was glaring at Blue Ease, "You guys could've targeted Silver Moon any d*mn time; why would you choose to do so when we're making our move as well?!"

"M*th*rf*ck*rs, why did you guys come here in Baishi City, anyway?! We've been keeping our eyes on that guy for the whole night; if we're not gonna act now, when would we find another chance to do so?!" Blue Ease countered. He was once the second-in-command of the eradicated Past Deeds Guild; his enmity with Dusky Cloud and his men was at the same level as his hatred for

Silver Moon and Vast Lushness, so what pleasantries could they say to one another? Both parties believed that it was the sudden appearance of the other team that had spoiled their plan. All the players in the central plaza had their weapons out, looking as though they would fight once more.

“Boss, we should hurry and chase after Silver Moon!” Some players were still level-headed.

“Chase, my *ss! How’s anyone gonna chase after the missing Silver Moon?” The two had once more said the same thing, causing them to glare at each other.

“Stop copying my words!” Dusky Cloud was the first to say this.

Blue Ease originally wanted to say the same thing, but since Dusky Cloud had been faster than him in saying it, he hastily changed his words, “Go to hell!”

“Since Silver Moon escaped, I’ll just slay you, instead!” Dusky Cloud was ready to attack.

“Not if you’re the first to go down!” Blue Ease did not back down, raising the magic staff in his hand.

At this moment, some players from either side were feebly asking, “Who’s that guy?”

This question effectively extinguished the very embers of war that were about to ignite. Plenty of players from either side were newer additions to their respective guilds; on Dusky Cloud’s side, the enemy often mentioned was either the arrogant Vast Lushness or the devious Silver Moon; Blue Ease was someone who had already been relegated to the mob that constituted Past Deeds as a whole. As for Blue Ease, his resentment was directed to the entire Ten Guild Alliance. Gu Fei would be Blue Ease and his men’s first choice for a person to target or to loathe; Dusky Cloud would not even be considered for that position. Above all, it was Silver Moon who had shirked his responsibility and abandoned Past Deeds

during those turbulent times that hurt them the most. His name was often mentioned by them in disdain and was largely regarded as the person responsible for the collapse of Past Deeds.

The surrounding players' innocuous question about the other party's identity had caused Blue Ease and Dusky Cloud to come to their senses. The question floated in either man's mind for quite a while, even as the hot blood pumping through them cooled.

The Past Deeds Guild was indeed as what its name suggested: It was already in the 'past'.

Blue Ease and his men were now residents of Baishi City, and they hardly had any connection with Dusky Cloud and his men from Yueye City. If there was one thing connecting them, it would be their goal to hunt for Silver Moon. When the saying: 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend' flashed through the two men's minds, both of them promptly turned their heads to the side and spat.

F*ck that saying! No way I'm gonna be friends with this hateful guy! Dusky Cloud scornfully glared at Blue Ease, as Blue Ease contemptuously stared back at Dusky Cloud.

The hot-bloodedness of the players hailing from Yueye City reared its ugly head once more. Just this stare either party shared almost caused a fight to erupt once more. The two were about to hurl insults at each other when some of their men feebly asked, "Are we not going to search for Silver Moon anymore?"

Blue Ease had been living in Baishi City long enough for the hot-blooded nature he had nurtured in Yueye City to erode quite a bit. Calming himself down, he glared at Dusky Cloud for a moment before saying, "I don't have time to play with you guys right now; we'll settle this matter once we are done taking care of Silver Moon." With that, he led his men away from the central plaza as he arranged his men for their next move.

"Kill him! Kill him now!" Seeing the other party's departing

back, Celestial Pig somewhat grew anxious. During Past Deeds' tyranny, Silver Moon was not the only one who had bullied him so much; Blue Ease had also killed him plenty of times back then.

Dusky Cloud eyeballed Celestial Pig. "Kill, your ss. Let's focus on the matter at hand. That bst*rd Silver Moon has caused us quite the setback here as well as the lives of many of our men." Dusky Cloud slapped his forehead after saying this and hurriedly shouted, "Quickly pass this message: All those players who have died should not rush over and return to their spawn points, instead!"

If Silver Moon intended to log off at any of these spawn points, would he actually be faster than those men who had died and respawned? Even if Dusky Cloud's men failed to make it in time and ambush Silver Moon outside a spawn point, they could at least try again as long as they knew which log-off point Silver Moon had used to return to reality by leaving some men behind to keep watch.

With this thought in mind, Dusky Cloud checked if the players who had died in that last engagement were from the seven main job classes in Parallel World. He only sighed in relief once he received affirmation of this fact.

"Hang in there, everyone." Dusky Cloud knew that all were exhausted after staying up the entire night, so he made it a point to encourage them. Following this, he roared: "Inform our guys in Yueye City to send some m*th*rf*ck*ng backups!"

Chapter 311 - The Scariest Foe

Silver Moon indeed lived up to his reputation of being insidious and devious. And because he was such a hated individual, everyone had long associated him with these two qualities. Back when Blue Ease and company were comrades of Silver Moon, they would often praise him for his intelligence and shrewdness.

Memories of his days with Past Deeds resurfaced after Blue Ease's clash with Dusky Cloud and he recalled the many comrades he had once fought alongside with. Although the guild was widely notorious, with plenty of players badmouthing it on the forums, he had plenty of fun back in those days. In contrast, his days were peaceful here in Baishi City, yet he always felt something lacking.

"Big Blue, are you crying? Why are your eyes all red?" the brothers around him asked.

Why would recalling those days bring tears to his eyes? Blue Ease was never the sentimental type. Furtively wiping his eyes, he felt no wetness whatsoever. He turned to face his brothers and chided, "Cry, my *ss! We've been up all night; that's why they're red! In fact, everyone's eyes here are red!"

All of them looked at one another before rubbing their eyes. It was already two hours past their usual log-off time, so it was only natural for them to be exhausted by now. Blue Ease took a trip down memory lane and began sharing about his glorious days in Yueye City to the others. His brothers instantly stopped rubbing their eyes and moved to cover their ears, instead, "F*ck. He's at it again. You've already told us this story hundreds of times."

"Did I really repeat myself so often?" Blue Ease was disgruntled.

"It's less than that woman you always mention. You've at least repeated stories about that Vast Lushness woman for over a thousand times."

“Vast Lushness is truly a beast. She may be a woman, but she’s literally the greatest among us Past Deeds’ members in terms of loyalty and strength of character. Back in those days—”

“AHHHHH! It’s a thousand and one times now!” His brothers were distraught.

Blue Ease at least halted his narration after a few sentences. This was because a group of men walked by Blue Ease’s team, and just like them, they all had red eyes. These men were rubbing their eyes as they passed by, looking as if they were fighting off lethargy.

“D*mn. So unlucky. Why haven’t we bumped into that guy yet?” Blue Ease spat to the side of the road.

Dusky Cloud also spotted Blue Ease, instantly showing him his middle finger, “M*th*rf*ck*r. Why aren’t you logging off to sleep yet?”

“None of your g*dd*mn business. I’m not tired yet.” Blue Ease also raised his middle finger in response.

“Give up if you can’t hold on any longer.” Dusky Cloud widened his eyes as he brought his men past Blue Ease’s team.

“Give up? Have I ever given up?” Blue Ease widened his eyes as well, but Dusky Cloud had already walked past him and did not even look backward once. Blue Ease turned to face his brothers, asking, “Have I ever given up?”

“Never!” they answered.

Both parties had done the same thing of getting their men to remain in their respective job classes’ spawn points across Baishi City. Blue Ease and Dusky Cloud were currently checking the situation in all the seven places, so it was inevitable for the two parties to encounter each other on the road.

It was as though Silver Moon had seen through both parties’ intentions. Instead of heading straight to a log-off point after escaping from the central plaza, he had hidden himself somewhere

in the city. With the OP party-wide skill of King's Command and his group of twelve men, it was not particularly difficult for him to make a break for any of the spawn points. However, Silver Moon had already realized the perils of revealing which spawn point he would log off to the enemies. Doing so would allow innumerable players to spawn camp him when he logged back later on.

Silver Moon fully assumed he would be facing each of the over four thousand members of the Ten Guild Alliance, so he did not dare ask for Traversing Four Seas' assistance. The seven hundred men they had was simply not enough against the full force of the Ten Guild Alliance. If the latter really decided to block his path out, not even Traversing Four Seas would be able to rescue him. Thus, the safest move for Silver Moon was to secretly make his way to the next city. The problem was, although he had learned from Oathless Sword that their expedition's next destination was Linyin City, Silver Moon did not know how to get there. He had regrettably not met any players in Baishi City who had been there before or knew of the way.

Silver Moon wanted to test his luck by finding his way there on his own, but when he and his men tried to sneak out of the city, they received quite the fright; Dusky Cloud had apparently also thought of this move and had assigned some men to guard the city gates. Silver Moon lamented his hardships, for although the men Dusky Cloud had placed by the city gates were no match for Silver Moon and his gang with King's Command, those men did not intend to fight with them to death and only planned to inform Dusky Cloud and the rest of the Ten Guild Alliance of their departure so that they could chase after them.

Silver Moon's twelve-man team was made up of Warriors or Knights and a couple of Priests. Each of them had a frustratingly slow movement speed. As long as the enemies sent out Archers or Thieves, Silver Moon and his men would have no way of losing them on their tail. Their inability to effectively fight back or chase

off these faster job classes only highlighted the importance of having a balanced team composition.

Silver Moon was currently in a very awkward position, and he was unable to come up with a way to extricate himself from it. On the other side of the fence, Dusky Cloud and his men were also wrought with anxiety. Silver Moon thought he was fighting against the Ten Guild Alliance's full force, so he did not dare ask Traversing Four Seas for help, but what he did not know was that Dusky Cloud was actually worried about Traversing Four Seas getting involved in all this. There would surely be plenty of losses in large-scale fights, and Dusky Cloud was unsure if his comrades were willing to sacrifice so much just to hunt down Silver Moon. Moreover, he might be the big boss of the Ten Guild Alliance, but no boss in a MMO had the power to compel each of his or her men to become cannon fodder with just a wave of an arm; the other players were no mindless idiots, after all.

Currently, Dusky Cloud's thought process was similar to that of a minimalist in that he only hoped to lock Traversing Four Seas in a stalemate. By then, it would depend on whether Traversing Four Seas' members were willing to sacrifice themselves for Silver Moon or not.

However, Baishi City was about three hours away from Yueye City, and it was currently in the early hours of the morning – the time when the nighttime gamers would log off and the daytime gamers would come online – so the number of players in-game was at its lowest. With how tired his men and fellow brothers were after being online for a whole day, it was rather questionable whether he could muster enough manpower to suppress the one thousand players of Traversing Four Seas. Did Silver Moon ask for Traversing Four Seas' help yet?

As Dusky Cloud sat in contemplation at a random tavern in Baishi City, the brothers around him were already fast asleep with their heads resting on the table. Fatigue was their scariest enemy

at the moment, and everyone decisively took turns napping to fight their inner sleep demons. Dusky Cloud ordered his least favorite liquor to drink to stimulate his nerves, volunteering to keep watch over his brothers. This was a game and not a classroom, after all; what would they do if they were attack while sleeping on the table? Yueye City might not have anyone bold enough to attack the Ten Guild Alliance's members, but the same could not be said for Baishi City.

Liquor was not something that could perk a person up. Dusky Cloud over-stimulated himself as the alcohol got to him. Grogginess settled in and he quickly nudged the comrade beside him, "F*ck*ng get up; it's my turn to rest for a while."

That drowsy player stared at him blearily for a moment before rebuking, "M*th*rf*ck*r! Only f*ck*ng thirty minutes have passed. Didn't we agree on an hour?"

"Wake me up after thirty minutes, then!" Dusky Cloud said no more and just rested his head on the table. Suddenly, a creaking sound was heard as someone pushed the tavern door open.

Dusky Cloud vigilantly raised his head and received a shock when he saw the person. "It's you."

Who else besides Young Master Han would head straight toward a tavern this early in the morning? He glanced over at Dusky Cloud and the other players hunched on the table, asleep. Young Master Han ordered liquor from the NPC bar owner and came over to sit with Dusky Cloud. "What are you guys doing here?"

"We followed Silver Moon the whole night," Dusky Cloud sighed.

"Did you fail?" Young Master Han asked.

Dusky Cloud nodded his head regretfully. "We had a little situation, and that guy got away."

"Oh? What happened?" Young Master Han asked after taking a gulp of the liquor that was finally sent over.

Although he disliked Young Master Han, it did not reach the level of animosity he had with Silver Moon. Since he was asking politely, Dusky Cloud summarized the situation for him.

“So what do you plan to do?” Young Master Han asked.

Dusky Cloud told him his plan accordingly.

“You’re prepared to war with Traversing Four Seas, then?” Young Master Han pressed on.

“Only if they don’t back down,” Dusky Cloud replied.

“Oh, they’ll back down; that’s for sure,” Young Master Han remarked.

“Oh?”

“This is precisely why Traversing Four Seas has spent so much money to hire the top mercenary groups in Yunduan City,” Young Master Han explained.

“So that they’ll be able to fight when the time comes?” Dusky Cloud asked.

Young Master Han shook his head, “A thousand-man army... Only your Ten Guild Alliance is capable of beating them, yet you guys just happen to be clashing with them. He he... Traversing Four Seas sure has a pretty terrible luck.”

Dusky Cloud was about to ask what Young Master Han meant when the door once more swung open and someone could be heard saying, “Let’s rest up in this tavern first. We’ll change shifts later, so everyone can take turns to rest up.”

Dusky Cloud swore loudly when he heard the person’s voice, instantly standing up from his seat, “Are you m*th*rf*ck*ng insane, Blue Ease? Why are you always there wherever I go?!”

Blue Ease was also extremely surprised to bump into Dusky Cloud here, immediately retorting, “You g*dd*mn b*st*rd, why are you f*ck*ng everywhere I go?!”

“What did you just say?!” Dusky Cloud slapped the table.

Blue Ease was about to get worked up when Young Master Han turned to face him. Blue Ease instantly froze up, “F*ck me. You... you....”

Although it had been a while, Young Master Han’s face was not something anyone could easily forget. Blue Ease immediately recognized him to be the same person that had tricked him into splitting up his troops back in Yueye City, which provided the Ten Guild Alliance the chance to mount their assault. Were it not for this man, Blue Ease could possibly still be gallivanting about in Yueye City right now!

“KILL THIS MAN!” Blue Ease pointed at Young Master Han with one hand as he pulled out his magic staff with the other. The men following behind him also pulled out their weapons when they heard his command.

Dusky Cloud stood in front of Young Master Han as he stared at them. “What are you guys planning to do?” Despite his dislike of Young Master Han, he was still considered as a friend of his friend. Therefore, Dusky Cloud could not just stand by and watch Blue Ease bully him. Dusky Cloud fearlessly stepped forward as he called his comrades to him. But when he looked back, all he saw were his brothers still sleeping soundly on the table. Infuriated, Dusky Cloud swiftly overturned the table with a kick, “Stop f*ck*ng napping and get up to fight!”

“What – What?! What’s going on?!” These men woke up with a start, wiping off their drool even as they pulled out their weapons. Their eyes began searching around the tavern for their target as they muttered, “Where is he?” All of them spotted Blue Ease, yet none stopped to register him as the enemy.

“What are you guys f*ck*ng looking around for?! He’s right here!” Dusky Cloud pointed at Blue Ease in front of them.

“F*ck!” All of them waved their hands dismissively, saying, “Stop

messing around.” Everyone just thought that Dusky Cloud was verbally sparring with Blue Ease again and his words were merely empty threats at him. Why would Dusky Cloud wait until now to act if he really wanted to fight the man in the first place?

“D*mn you!” Dusky Cloud could only watch his men return their heads on the table to resume resting, feeling incensed over his inability to explain the matter at hand.

This was when Young Master Han calmly asked, “What? Aren’t you guys working together to deal with Silver Moon?”

Chapter 312 - Hurry up and Sleep

At Young Master Han's words, Dusky Cloud and Blue Ease showed a supercilious expression on their faces as they openly eyed each other with contempt.

"Who's going to do the deed if you two happen to find Silver Moon together?" Young Master Han gazed at the two leaders.

"What nonsense. Of course, it's gonna be me. I spent three hours traveling all the way from Yueye City for this; it's only right for me to get him," Dusky Cloud replied.

"So you do know this isn't Yueye City. Silver Moon will be for us to kill if you know what's good for you!" Blue Ease threatened.

"Ha ha ha ha! I honestly don't want to tell you this, but Silver Moon doesn't only have those twelve men with him! This brother here included," Dusky Cloud heavily patted Young Master Han's shoulder. "There are over a thousand players here from Yunduan City with him. May I ask just how many men you have under your command?"

"How many men I've got is none of your business!" Although Blue Ease said this, his heart actually beat with trepidation. He had been keeping an eye on Silver Moon ever since his arrival to Baishi City, so he had also come to know that Silver Moon was not by himself. Furthermore, he definitely did not have as many as the four thousand men Dusky Cloud had under his Ten Guild Alliance's banner. The men he fielded last night were essentially the most he could muster. Losing that opportunity last night, he knew how impossible it would be for them to continue hunting Silver Moon with his leftover manpower.

However, players of Yueye City would rather lose their lives than lose face, so they were not about to back down from a verbal war. Blue Ease, being a past resident of that city, continued to bicker with Dusky Cloud. The comrades of Blue East finally could not

stand this and found themselves a seat each, saying, “Big Blue, you do your thing. We’ll take a nap first!” With that, they made themselves comfortable on their seats and rested their heads on the table.

“F*ck! What are you guys sleeping for?! Get up and fight with me!” Blue Ease walked over to drag them to their feet.

“Stop squabbling already. I’m beat. Finish up your argument quickly and head to sleep once you’re done!” His comrades were clearly of the same mind with Dusky Cloud’s men, firmly believing that these two were merely verbally sparring with each other.

“F*ck!” Dusky Cloud and Blue Ease cursed out loud at the same time.

“You two should really stop fighting here,” Young Master Han began.

“F*ck! Who do you think you are?!” Blue Ease clearly viewed Young Master Han as an enemy, lashing out at him when the latter attempted to mediate.

Blue Ease had plenty of reasons to hate him, so Young Master Han was not particularly angered by his outburst, plainly stating, “What I mean to say is that you guys should go out and duel it out! I have an excellent suggestion here, so if neither of you can find it within yourselves to work together, I can only offer it to one party.”

Dusky Cloud burst into laughter without a second thought. “Brother Han, is there even a need to discuss the outcome? Of course, I’d be victorious. I won’t fight with that kid any longer. He’s now a boss himself; I think it’s best to leave him some face in front of his boys! Quickly tell me your ingenious plan!”

What he said was rather objective. Dusky Cloud was a Thief, while Blue Ease was a Mage; the latter would often have trouble dealing with the former in a duel. Blue Ease was not about to back

down, though. Scornfully tossing Dusky Cloud a glance, he said, “What? Scared of facing me in a duel?”

Dusky Cloud turned over and looked him in the eye, “Kid, since you’re turning down my attempt to give you face, does this mean you want me to take you down a peg?”

“You don’t know yet who will take down whom!”

“Don’t be stubborn; I’m showing you pity here by helping you conserve a bit of your level. You can still have what’s left of Silver Moon after we’ve had our fun with him.”

“I’ll bet you’re the one who’s trying to conserve level here. Are you starting to value yourself more after being the boss for so long? You’re not gonna become the next Silver Moon and abandon your guild when sh*t hits the fan, are you?”

“YOU M*TH*RF*CK*R, GO TO HELL!” Dusky Cloud looked as though he had heard the world’s biggest insult – his bloodshot eyes from staying up all night looked as though they would start bleeding at any given moment. Pulling out his dagger while activating Fleetfoot, he pounced on Blue Ease.

Words were just words, but when it came to fighting, players from Yueye City were not the least bit vague about their intentions. The Mage Blue Ease riling up the Thief Dusky Cloud was not just out of obstinacy; Blue Ease was actually slightly confident that he could win the fight. Seeing Dusky Cloud come straight at him, his empty hand shot out as he muttered something under his breath.

With a loud crackle, Dusky Cloud was thrown toward a table and crashed into the ground. While he was in a daze, Blue Ease seized this chance to lift his magic staff. Chanting another incantation, a bolt of lightning pealed from the roof right onto Dusky Cloud’s head. This was indeed the very first skill a Lightning Mage learned: Thunderbolt. Blue Ease had actually gone down the lesser traveled path just like Gu Fei, choosing the Lightning Affinity option that

most Mages ignored.

However, his Thunderbolt was nowhere near as powerful as Gu Fei's, so that one strike did not injure Dusky Cloud much, allowing the latter to scramble back to his feet in no time at all.

That fall interrupted Dusky Cloud's Fleetfoot, though, and caused the skill to go on cooldown, making him suffer a significant drop in speed. Blue Ease utilized the tavern's indoor layout; circling around the tables and chairs, he waited for his skill's cooldown to finish so he could strike Dusky Cloud with another Thunderbolt. The speed of Fireball and Repeating Fireball was incomparable with Thunderbolt, making it impossible for anyone to avoid it.

Dusky Cloud was angered! He chased after Blue Ease around the table; although he had the advantage when it came to Agility, he had no way of utilizing his top speed in this cramped space. His whole body would be momentarily paralyzed every time that Thunderbolt struck him. This was no way to continue the fight!

Dusky Cloud no longer mindlessly pursued Blue Ease and began kicking the stools and toppling the tables over to clear out space for him to give chase and prevent Blue Ease from evading him further.

It was still in the wee hours, so hardly anyone else, besides their respective groups and Young Master Han, was in the tavern. Blue Ease ran about freely while Dusky Cloud followed closely behind, bearing each spell and persevering through every Thunderbolt.

"B*st*rd, your magic defense isn't weak. To think you're still so spirited after taking so many hits," Blue Ease continued to circle around the place as he said this. He had already struck Dusky Cloud four times.

"Don't worry; it's enough for me to catch up to you. You're gonna regret not growing an extra pair of legs after this!" Dusky Cloud was very confident of himself.

The sound of fighting filled the tavern, making it seem very lively. Young Master Han was rather entertained watching this. Quite a few men from both parties were woken up from their slumber by the two's din. They drowsily looked at the scene before them. But when they saw what was going on, all of them got up to their feet and took out their weapons, "F*ck! They're really fighting!"

Some of them even commented with great dissatisfaction, "You should've just fought earlier; why must you start things now? I'm exhausted."

"That's right!" Quite a few others expressed their agreement while yawning.

The underlings from both sides eyed one another, yet they hesitated over starting a fight. Young Master Han, meanwhile, brought his bottle of liquor and glass over to a corner, giving the two leaders a wide berth.

Everyone had a similar experience before; at this point where they needed sleep the most, any activity around them would fail to pique their interest, especially when that nice nap they were having was suddenly interrupted. Right now, they only wished to wrap things up here so that they could go back to sleeping.

There was only one way to resolve the matter at hand as quickly possible. Both groups acted at the same time, with Blue Ease's men surging forward to hold back Blue Ease and Dusky Cloud's comrades restraining Dusky Cloud. "Stop fighting already. What's there to fight about? Conserve your energy and sleep, instead!"

Both parties dragged their bosses back to their seats.

"Let me go!" Dusky Cloud growled, declaring, "I'm gonna kill him!"

"Kill me? How much HP have you got left? I'll electrocute you to death!" Blue Ease raised his hand to cast Thunderbolt, yet his men

covered his mouth to prevent him from saying another word.

Dusky Cloud was treated like this on his end as well, with his men forcibly restraining him to the bench. “Go to sleep! Stop this f*ck*ng nonsense already! Save it for fighting with Silver Moon, instead.”

It was an odd sight to witness players from Yueye City actually preventing people from fighting instead of joining in the fight. To think that all it took for this to happen was these men’s urgent need of sleep. If the desire for sleep was not so huge, why else would humans spend over one third of their time on this particular pastime?

They managed to restrain Dusky Cloud, but in fear of him running amok again, two Warriors held each of his arms by the side and forcefully used them as pillows as they got back to sleeping.

Dusky Cloud did not know how to react to this. Trying his best to get away, he said in frustration, “Let me go, d*mn it!” The two Warriors merely snored. “M*th*rf*ck*rs, I won’t go up and kill him, alright?!”

They slowly released his arms and Dusky Cloud stared at Blue Ease across him. Blue Ease had also promised his men that he would not be rash, so they let him go. Both men glared at each other for a while before eyeing their men with contempt.

“F*ck*ng hell, you’re all a bunch of useless idiots!” Dusky Cloud swore.

“Sleep some more, then; I hope you guys die in your sleep!” Blue Ease chided.

By this time, Young Master Han once more drifted over with a glass in hand. “Gentlemen, since this fight has ended in a stalemate, why don’t you resolve this simply with a game of rock-paper-scissors?”

“Hmph. Do you dare?” Dusky Cloud taunted.

“Are you a f*ck*ng moron? Why would I not dare?!” Blue Ease stood up in agitation, but his men alertly held him back. “Let go; didn’t you hear what he said?! It’s just rock-paper-scissors,” he admonished before they let him go. The two men walked right to the center of the tavern and looked at each other with disdain.

“You coward, don’t you dare show your hand late just because your Agility is lower than mine!” Dusky Cloud taunted.

“You better not use my slow hand speed as an excuse to deny me my win,” Blue Ease taunted back.

“F*ck y*u! How would I win with you showing your hand late?” Dusky Cloud asked.

“You moron; I’m a Mage! How would my hand even be faster than yours? You should be the one slowing down to match my speed. Don’t go calling me a cheater now,” Blue Ease chided.

“Tell me just how fast your hand could go, then!” Dusky Cloud was incensed.

“Gentlemen, please.” Young Master Han could not stand these two’s bickering any longer. “How about this; let’s not use our hands this way. Each of you will write it out on a paper, and I shall be the judge of things, alright?”

“Let’s go with that, then!” The two each took out a piece of paper each and carefully handed their final product to Young Master Han. Young Master Han did not pause and promptly displayed both papers for them to see.

“HA HA HA HA HA!” Dusky Cloud was beyond elated. “See my scissors? Watch it snip off your cowardly tail!” Dusky Cloud had written ‘scissors’, while Blue Ease had written ‘paper’, immediately deciding the victor for their match.

Blue Ease was just unlucky here, so he did not say another word. Holding his anger within, he quietly went back to his seat.

“Alright, Brother Han, tell me about this plan of yours!” Dusky Cloud was in a great mood, so he was addressing Young Master Han rather warmly, even as he continued to provokingly gaze at Blue Ease with derision.

Chapter 313 - Leave it to us

The squabble between the two leaders was finally resolved with a game of rock-paper-scissors. Although it was a game played by children, at least Blue Ease was willing to accept the outcome of the match. He returned to his seat and just sat there without speaking another word, stewing in his anger.

“Brother Han, quickly tell us about your plan!” Dusky Cloud urged Young Master Han.

“You see, Silver Moon is just one man; it’s simply not worth it to muster such a large force for him alone. Getting so many men to dedicate their time to hunt down that man is thoroughly unsatisfying for everyone involved,” Young Master Han began.

“That’s true. Do you have a better plan, perhaps?” Dusky Cloud nodded his head in agreement as he asked on.

“Essentially, you should assign some men to guard the Knights’ Barracks. Let my mercenary group, Young Master’s Elite, be the one to kill Silver Moon instead and deliver him straight into your arms when we travel later tonight,” Young Master Han proposed.

“Uh... Will that be appropriate?” Dusky Cloud was shocked. His question did not stem from his doubt on the capabilities of Young Master’s Elite but from the situation that the six men would be putting themselves into. After all, they were temporary comrades with Silver Moon for this guild quest that Traversing Four Seas had hired them for. How would the over one thousand players treat these six men if they were found attacking Silver Moon? Did Young Master Han not understand how serious this problem was?

“Heh...” Young Master Han knew exactly what Dusky Cloud was thinking and he coolly replied, “Don’t worry. This will be done in secret.”

“Would that... work?” Dusky Cloud was a little apprehensive

about their capabilities this time. With how wily and shrewd Silver Moon was, he would surely be on his guard toward his past enemies. All of them had also considered employing the backstabbing approach on Silver Moon. But since this was Silver Moon, who was adept at backstabbing when it suited him, that they were dealing with, while it might sound easy to strike him when he least expected it, they were not sure if he would grant them a chance to put him in such a spot.

“Don’t worry about this. If you can trust us, pay us our fee,” Young Master Han said.

“Pay? Fee?” Dusky Cloud was nonplussed.

“Bro, we’re a mercenary group. Don’t you know the rules to this?!” Young Master Han listlessly stared at him.

“F*ck!” Dusky Cloud stood up abruptly. He was naturally aware of the rule, but he simply did not expect Young Master Han to actually discuss this matter from a business standpoint. In his mind, it was only natural for friends to help one another, and talking about money only cheapened this relationship. For straightforward and pure men like themselves, money and assets were nothing in the face of the bonds they forged.

The newfound goodwill he had for Young Master Han evaporated in an instant, and as he glared at the latter’s smiling face, all Dusky Cloud could feel was utter contempt for the man. Dusky Cloud was convinced that he had not been mistaken from the start; this man was truly detestable – the very opposite of everything he stood for and believed.

“But on account of the friendship we have, we won’t charge you exorbitantly,” Young Master Han said.

“No.” Dusky Cloud’s expression soured. “Since this is strictly business, let’s not drag our friendship into this. Charge us as you will.”

“Boss Cloud is truly a forthright person.” Young Master Han took a swig of his liquor and got up. “You’ll receive our bill after the deed is done.”

“Don’t you want a deposit? Isn’t this against the usual procedure here?” Dusky Cloud said rather evenly. While it was rare to find an employer who would mention the issue of a deposit first, Dusky Cloud only said it to mock Young Master Han about his ways.

“No need for that. Boss Cloud is someone who’s passably trustworthy,” Young Master Han replied.

Passably trustworthy... Dusky Cloud clenched his fists.

Young Master Han was laughing now. “Alright, that’s everything to it. Wash up and head to sleep! I’ll take my leave first.” Young Master Han bought several more bottles of liquor before leaving the tavern with an obvious pep in his step. In fact, he even glanced over to Blue Ease and asked, “That skill you were using just then... It’s like psychic teleportation, right?”

Blue Ease was momentarily stunned, but before he could answer, Young Master Han exited the tavern. Dusky Cloud glared at him, “Kid, did you trick me just then?”

“What nonsense; it’s a skill in the game. Are you trying to weasel out of your loss?” Blue Ease retorted.

“Who lost?! Just who the f*ck has lost!?” Dusky Cloud bellowed.

“Let’s go at it again if you’re unsatisfied!”

Their swearing grew louder as the tavern descended into chaos once more....

Young Master Han no longer gave much thought about their matter once he left the establishment, as there were not many arrangements needed to be made for this plan. Young Master Han was also not really bothered whether Dusky Cloud’s team wished to continue searching for Silver Moon in the day or rotate their men to keep watch outside the Knights’ Barracks until nighttime.

Neither move really affected what Young Master's Elite had to do on their end, anyway.

When 6 P.M. came, the players from Yunduan City trickled online and gathered by the north gate of Baishi City. A long string of players coming from the prison headed over to this rendezvous point, as well. These players were the members of Traversing Four Seas, having just retrieved the corrupt official, Todd, who was their escort target.

Prisoner Todd was in the custody of Guild Leader Oathless Sword, who swaggered in front of this contingent of men. This was already their second city, which meant that Traversing Four Seas' guild quest was already 40% completed, without meeting much trouble on the road. The deaths they had incurred thus far were largely negligible, while the largest amount of 'casualties' they had had was due to those cowards not daring to cross the crevasses in the Oolong Mountain Range.

The six men of Young Master's Elite, who were mixed within the crowd of mercenaries, carefully searched for someone. All of them were shaking their heads as they looked everywhere.

"Anyone spotted Silver Moon yet?" these men asked one another on the mercenary channel.

Their answers were all negative.

Young Master Han had already informed the other five about him picking up a request from Dusky Cloud to send Silver Moon back to Baishi City, and each of them was more than happy to oblige. With Gu Fei's indomitable fighting prowess as well as the others' seamless teamwork, it would possibly take no more than a few seconds to finish off Silver Moon and not even a divine intervention could save him from the fate of dying. It was only the issue of public opinion that had them exercising discretion over this particular deed.

They all asked Young Master Han what plan he had, yet the only

answer he gave was: “Strike when the opportunity presents itself.”

However, that opportunity itself had yet to surface, as they were unable to locate Silver Moon at all.

“Relax; he’s bound to be somewhere in this army. He’ll truly be courting death if he doesn’t use this chance to leave Baishi City,” Young Master Han said confidently.

Silver Moon had indeed mixed himself into the midst of Traversing Four Seas’ troops. He had a really tough day thus far, staying awake from the morning until now as he wandered around the city, feeling alarmed by the slightest breeze and the rustling of leaves. He stayed up all the way until the resumption of the quest this night, and then he and his men sneaked their way to the prison and waited. Just as he had expected, the men from Traversing Four Seas gathered outside the prison building. Silver Moon greeted Oathless Sword before mixing himself with the latter’s troops that were leaving the city.

Silver Moon did not say a word to Oathless Sword about his current predicament because he was certain that, given their relationship with one another, Oathless Sword would not consider his needs above that of the guild. If Silver Moon’s opponents were just a few unruly ruffians, Oathless Sword would surely help extricate him from the mess. Since the enemies after his head this time were from the Ten Guild Alliance, Silver Moon was certain that Oathless Sword would instantly toss him out like a hot potato.

Therefore, Silver Moon settled with mixing himself into the midst of Traversing Four Seas to sneak out of the city. It was difficult to locate one person in a horde of hundreds, after all. The only worry he had was that the Ten Guild Alliance’s men might take a heavy-handed approach and figuratively burn all the boats – willing to take on the thousand-man army of Traversing Four Seas for the sake of killing Silver Moon.

Since the Ten Guild Alliance’s ‘m*th*rf*ck*rs’ were more than

capable of demonstrating this level of ‘largesse’, Silver Moon was exceptionally worried. If they were willing to make such a play, he reckoned Oathless Sword would not throw down the gauntlet for his sake and might betray him, instead. Thus, Silver Moon was prepared for both outcomes. He would hide among the crowd, but once he spotted the Ten Guild Alliance, he would promptly cry out, “Brothers, to arms!” like before and slip away.

This was why Silver Moon’s anxiety was at its peak as they got closer to the city gate. He vigilantly looked all around him, but besides the men from Yunduan City that were waiting for Traversing Four Seas to continue the expedition, he did not see any other troops waiting by the city gate. Silver Moon made it quite a distance out from the city gate, but the men he was certain would appear to ambush him had yet to reveal themselves.

“That’s it?” Silver Moon was extremely astonished. Dusky Cloud had especially traveled all the way to Baishi City just to kill him; he did not believe that the latter would just give up on him so easily. However, where were they right now? Even if they were currently not revealing themselves, they might secretly be monitoring his every move.

Thinking of this, Silver Moon consciously stooped lower as he did his best to meld into the crowd. This was not a long term solution, though; he knew it was necessary for him to confirm that no one was trailing after him. Although it had been hours since he last slept, his mind was still as agile as ever. He originally wanted to entrust his one of his brothers-in-arms to straggle from the main body by feigning grinding in a nearby map so as to observe and find out if there were players still pursuing him. However, he thought of the possibility of his pursuers being Thieves in Stealth mode. This meant that his brothers-in-arms would still have no idea if the said assailants were right beside him.

This was no trouble to the shrewd, or in other words, the cunning Silver Moon, though. Pondering on this for a moment, he

immediately went to the front to look for Guild Leader Oathless Sword of Traversing Four Seas.

“Oathless Sword, it seems that there are people secretly following us!” Silver Moon solemnly said.

“Oh? People? How do you know?” Oathless Sword quickly asked.

“I have a comrade who has something urgent and can’t play tonight.” Silver Moon began to fabricate smoothly. “On his way back to the city to log out, he saw some men inquiring after those players grinding about the direction we are going to before heading toward where we’re going as well.”

“Is that so? So where are those people now?” Oathless Sword asked.

“I don’t really know. That comrade of mine has urgent matters to attend to, so he only said this much and did not investigate about it any further as he was in a hurry to head back to the city,” Silver Moon replied regretfully.

“This can’t be a good thing!” Oathless Sword said as he quickly gestured for his fellow core members, Gale Force and Youthful Reflection, to come over to him.

When Youthful Reflection heard this news, he instantly asked, “Are you certain that these are players and not NPCs?”

“NPCs? Would NPCs even need to ask players about what we are doing?” Silver Moon asked.

“They are players, then... What would players be secretly following us for?” Youthful Reflection began to contemplate about this matter, as well.

“Perhaps, they are curious as to why many of us are traveling together like this?” Gale Force guessed.

“It’s best to pull out a few of these men and ask,” Silver Moon said.

“Mhm! Let’s not spread this news just yet. Our troops should continue their march onward; I’ll make the necessary arrangements,” Youthful Reflection said.

“Let’s do just that! Thanks Silver Moon bro for your help.” Oathless Sword gave Silver Moon a friendly pat.

“You’re welcome; I’m always here to help!” Silver Moon rubbed his bloodshot eyes as he grinned from ear to ear.

Chapter 314 - Him again

Oathless Sword and his men did not dare to be careless when facing a possible threat to Traversing Four Seas' guild quest. As the battalion of men continued their journey toward the next destination, Youthful Reflection requested two Thieves to remain behind while in Stealth to find out if there were any players following them.

These two Thieves were from the mercenary groups. This basically highlighted Traversing Four Seas' thought process and preferred course of action for this quest: They would first mobilize the mercenary groups they had hired for anything that was deemed risky.

These two Thieves stayed behind the advancing troops, maintaining their Stealth while Oathless Sword and Youthful Reflection anxiously waited for news. Silver Moon was equally concerned and was treating this matter very seriously. This act of his moved Oathless Sword and Youthful Reflection quite a bit; how rare was it for them to find a mercenary who would be so responsible in this individualistic and materialistic world? They were quickly reminded of Young Master's Elite's money gouging ways – a clear juxtaposition to the professional they saw before them.

The troops continued on their way for about fifteen minutes, yet not one message arrived in the end. The core leaders were in deep thought at this. Just as Silver Moon was about to suggest something, Oathless Sword said to Youthful Reflection, “Perhaps, they are Thieves in Stealth as well.”

“I reckon that that’s the case, too.” Youthful Reflection nodded his head.

“If that’s the case, waiting here for the enemies to reveal themselves won’t work,” Oathless Sword said.

“However, it’s hard to say who’d be the first to discover whom if we let them continue following us like this,” Youthful Reflection said.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

In the early days of the game, Thieves were indeed the most ideal candidate to tail such large group of people, but as the players leveled, especially with the improvement in the standard of the equipment that they had, Thieves no longer had the capacity to do this.

The reason behind this was the disparity in movement speed.

When Thieves activated Stealth, their movement speed would drastically decrease to about 25% of their original movement speed.

Even the Priest, who had the slowest movement speed in Parallel World, would see a 0.7 increase to their movement speed every level up even without allocating points to Agility. The movement speed they possessed at level 40 would be $70 + 40 \times 0.7 = 98$. The current trend among the level 40 Priests was for them to equip a pair of Nimble Shoes that increased movement speed by 80, reaching a total of 178 movement speed. Nimble Shoes were commonly available and cheap, so plenty of players used them; in fact, almost any average Priest would have a pair on hand. Since the players present were first-rate gamers or at least quasi top-class, it was entirely possible for their current footwear to be even better than that pair of Nimble Shoes.

With 178-point movement speed as the baseline, a Thief in Stealth would require a movement speed of 712 points just to match it.

This movement speed of 712 was no joke, as this would be a stat only a superhuman would possess. Even someone like Gu Fei who had extremely fast movement speed did not have over 500 of it. Perhaps, even the speedster Svelte Dancer had yet to reach that

extraordinary level.

Therefore, unless the players were intentionally slowing down, the days when Thieves could solely depend on Stealth to easily stalk people were pretty much over. With how the entire horde of players from Yunduan City was currently heading to the next city in full speed, there was no way any Thieves looking to tail them could remain in Stealth the whole time; they would have to occasionally reveal themselves as they hurried to catch up.

Thus, when it came to preventing Thieves from stalking them, players only needed to grasp the timing of when the Thieves would have to reveal themselves. Oathless Sword would merely be relying on chance when they used the method they had employed before by tasking a few Thieves in Stealth to stay behind and watch their backs. There was no telling if the Thieves tailing them happened to only reveal themselves after they coincidentally stepped out of their line of sight, after all.

“Young Master’s Elite’s Thousand Miles Drunk seems to be capable of countering Stealth,” Gale Force mentioned.

“F*ck. Can we really not accomplish our quest without his help?” Youthful Reflection grumbled. Oathless Sword was disgruntled as well; looking for their help yet again meant Young Master Han could ‘earn’ another tidy sum off of him. It was also strange how the quest they were doing seemed to be designed for Gu Fei, requiring him to step in time and time again. “Let’s find our own solution!” Youthful Reflection decisively told Oathless Sword.

Oathless Sword nodded his head as he turned his gaze on the person whom he considered as the epitome of what a mercenary should be. “Does Silver Moon bro have any ideas to suggest?”

“Uhm... Hunting Trap is currently the only way I know that can counter Stealth,” Silver Moon replied.

“Hunting Trap...” Youthful Reflection muttered, “That’s not a very reliable solution. It’s not gonna work since we don’t know the

route our stalkers are taking....”

“Let’s take this as our last resort, then! Don’t we happen to have one such mercenary group that would be perfect for this?” Oathless Sword asked.

Youthful Reflection nodded his head as he sent a message on the party channel for mercenary leaders, calling for the group leader of The Great Hunting, Sakurazaka Moony, to come forward. The Hunter quickly made his way to the front and greeted everyone present.

Silver Moon instantly recognized Sakurazaka Moony as the person currently hanging around Vast Lushness. Fearing that this Hunter might not look on him too kindly, Silver Moon did not make things difficult for himself and voluntarily stepped to the side to avoid him. As Silver Moon had expected, when Sakurazaka Moony caught sight of him, the glare he gave oozed with contempt. He and his mercenary group had more or less learned the whole story after being hunted for an entire day and night the day before. No matter how anyone looked at it, there was no way for anyone to mistake Silver Moon as anything but a scum.

“What’s the matter?” Sakurazaka Moony asked Oathless Sword and the rest of the men.

Youthful Reflection quickly got him up to speed. “Your mercenary group is mostly made up of Hunters, right?”

Sakurazaka Moony sighed regretfully, “Originally, yes. We’ve lost about twenty-two of them a few days back in Yueye City, so that statement is no longer true.”

“So the rumors are true!” Youthful Reflection was astonished. When the mercenaries were comparing the losses that they had suffered in Yueye City, he overheard Sakurazaka Moony bragging about going up against the Ten Guild Alliance, sacrificing twenty-two men in the process. Everyone had thought that he was merely boasting back then. Now Youthful Reflection knew otherwise.

Sakurazaka Moony's expression was colder than the iciest blizzard. "Did you think otherwise?"

"So be it, then! I'm sure there are still Hunters in the other mercenary groups with us. Let's just gather them and let Moony here take charge of the setup," Oathless Sword said as he turned his head to the side, asking, "Any thoughts, Silver Moon bro?"

Big mistake! Silver Moon shouted inside him. He felt like crying right now, yet no tears would come out. This was an understandable blunder on Oathless Sword's end, though. After all, this was a plan Silver Moon had suggested, and asking him for his input before going ahead with it was Oathless Sword's way of displaying his respect toward Silver Moon. The problem was that such an act did not sit well with the present company.

As expected, Sakurazaka Moony's displeasure was made apparent once he heard that the plan was something Silver Moon had cooked up. He even looked as though Silver Moon had been the one to send him off to work. Sakurazaka Moony's dignity would not allow it, so he promptly thought up of an excuse to exempt himself from this plan. "Ugh... My stomach hurts. Oh, no! I think I have to take my leave; you'll need to command that team yourselves!"

"Ah!" That single exclamation was the only thing he got out before Sakurazaka Moony disappearing with his 500+ movement speed.

"What just happened?" Youthful Reflection was looking at Oathless Sword in confusion.

"I don't know!" Oathless Sword was stunned as well. They were no fools, though, and could tell Sakurazaka Moony was faking his stomach ache to be excused from this.

Your tongue slipping is what happened... Silver Moon said to himself in frustration.

“There’s no way we can gather enough Hunters without their help!” Youthful Reflection was depressed. Advancing as a Hunter was already an unpopular choice for many Archers. Traversing Four Seas’ trump card was its archer formation, so they encouraged their men to advance as a Sharpshooter, thinking of resolving their lack of trappers through future recruitments once their guild leveled up some more! They really lacked such talents in their guild right now, so Sakurazaka Moony backing out at the last minute instantly rendered their Hunting-Trap plan useless.

“No choice. We’ll have to look for Thousand Miles Drunk’s help!” Gale Force said.

Oathless Sword and Youthful Reflection gritted their teeth when they heard this, while Silver Moon casually commented, “Thousand Miles Drunk... That guy isn’t too reliable, right?”

While he might look as if he did not care about this, Silver Moon was actually extremely anxious right now. The reason he was expending so much effort right now was not for the sake of Traversing Four Seas’ quest but for his survival. His goal was to find out if Dusky Cloud or Blue Ease had sent scouts after him and to borrow Traversing Four Seas’ strength to eliminate these threats accordingly. If Gu Fei were to go, he might just quickly decide to aid these men with their dark deed once they made contact and would just inform Oathless Sword that there were no issues behind them instead.

“That guy is indeed shameless and crafty,” Youthful Reflection remarked to Silver Moon’s delight.

“But his skill is the real deal!” Gale Force countered to Silver Moon’s displeasure. He had no way to refute this, though.

“I’m sure he won’t have any problems if we give him this task,” Oathless Sword said. As Silver Moon’s face turned ashen, Oathless Sword continued, “But he’s too expensive.” Silver Moon’s expression brightened slightly.

“Just what the heck is up with Sakurazaka Moony, anyway?” Youthful Reflection muttered, calling him over the party channel yet he received no response. Silver Moon did not even dare to say a word as he stood by the side.

“I’ll go look for him!” Youthful Reflection moved to talk face to face with Sakurazaka Moony to Silver Moon’s elation.

“Forget it,” Oathless Sword stopped him. “With how he looked, then, I’m certain he’s using this opportunity to make a killing off of us. Since we’ll pay for it no matter which option we take, we might as well rely on the far more effective Thousand Miles Drunk!” Silver Moon really had the mind to eviscerate Oathless Sword right there and then.

Youthful Reflection was sad as well, but he had to agree with the logic behind Oathless Sword’s statement. If Sakurazaka Moony were trying to gouge them out as well, then it would be better to get Gu Fei’s help.

“Call him!” Oathless Sword instantly thought of Young Master Han. He sighed to himself as he subconsciously felt for his coin pouch.

Silver Moon took the initiative to stand somewhere prominent this time, hoping that Gu Fei would refuse to help just like Sakurazaka Moony when he saw him.

When Gu Fei arrived, Silver Moon did not wait for Oathless Sword to speak. Stepping forward, he used a commanding tone to speak with Gu Fei. Unfortunately, he had underestimated Gu Fei’s professionalism. All he did was quietly listen to his every word before nodding his head. “Alright, I got it. You guys can carry on, then.”

“We’re in your care, then,” Oathless Sword patted Gu Fei’s shoulder.

Gu Fei nodded his head and pointed to Silver Moon before

leaving. "You should take care."

Silver Moon was mortified. Everyone around him could see the emotion reflected in his eyes; that vacant stare that hung on his face looked to be that of a dead man's.

Chapter 315 - Cutting off the Stalkers

Gu Fei's parting words almost gave Silver Moon the sudden impulse to immediately dive off the road for cover. He had the gut feeling that not only would Gu Fei discover that the assassins were after his life, he might just lead them straight to him as well. He had really been far too careless in his decision to reveal himself to Gu Fei! Silver Moon deeply regretted his thoughtless action now.

Silver Moon did not intend to die without putting up a fight, though, and so he came up with another idea on the spot. "Why don't we send some helpers with Thousand Miles Drunk?"

"He has his fellow mercenaries!" Oathless Sword's answer made Silver Moon feel that he might not get a chance to escape if he dragged the matter on, yet the latter unexpectedly retracted this statement quickly enough with a slap to his forehead. "Oh, wait. If we're not using his fellow mercenaries, we can send our helpers, instead." While Oathless Sword's goal was to lower the service fee he would have to pay, Silver Moon was still elated. If Traversing Four Seas sent their men with Gu Fei, how would he intentionally go easy on Dusky Cloud's team?

"It's best to not let him know about this; just send men to follow him secretly." Silver Moon's plans were more devious than the last. If Traversing Four Seas sent men after him openly, Gu Fei would most likely pretend to not have discovered the interlopers. However, if Traversing Four Seas' men followed him secretly, they might catch Gu Fei going easy on the enemies. This meant that they would not just take care of Dusky Cloud and his men, but Gu Fei would also be seen as a degenerate and a traitor, essentially killing two birds with one stone!

Unexpectedly, Traversing Four Seas' three core members turned to look curiously at Silver Moon.

Oh, no... Silver Moon thought to himself, I was too obvious when

I said that... Just as Silver Moon was about to say something to salvage the situation, he heard Youthful Reflection say, “Stealth doesn’t work on Thousand Miles Drunk!”

Silver Moon felt stunned. His moment of desperation had caused him to forget this fact, letting slip such a silly idea. The sleep deprivation and spike of anxiety he was suffering from delivered a substantial mental shock to him, causing Silver Moon to have such a momentary lapse of judgment.

“Still, it’s a good idea to send a few Thieves along with him! The enemies might be lulled into a false sense of security if they remain in Stealth beside Thousand Miles Drunk,” Oathless Sword said, not having any idea of Silver Moon’s real goal at all.

“Okay. I’ll go make the necessary arrangements!” Youthful Reflection agreed. In situations like this that had the possibility to escalate into combat, their first choice of personnel to deploy was naturally still the mercenaries. Special requests with mercenary groups like Young Master’s Elite would require extra fees, but that was only a condition that Young Master Han had especially fought for. Most mercenary groups were contented to be hired by Traversing Four Seas for one contract and would listen to any commands from the guild now that they were paid.

“Find someone reliable,” Oathless Sword ordered.

“Hmm... Shall we get Xiaoshang, then?” Youthful Reflection asked for Oathless Sword’s opinion.

“Yes!” Oathless Sword nodded his head. Among the many hired mercenary groups, Rainbow betwixt the Clouds headed by Gu Xiaoshang was possibly the only one that they could trust. Moreover, this mercenary group managed to snag the fourth place in the mercenary PvP tournament after losing to Brave Surge’s mercenary group.

Over by Young Master’s Elite, Gu Fei was naturally asked by the others about what Traversing Four Seas needed from him when he

returned. After telling them of the matter, all shared the same question in mind. “Are they Dusky Cloud’s men?”

“There’s no need for him to send men to trail us!”

“Why are we guessing? Let’s just ask the man himself.”

Sending a message over to the man, Dusky Cloud nervously replied: “No. We’re all lying in wait over by the Knights’ Barracks. Why? Is there a problem?”

“No problems!” Sword Demon, who had been in charge of contacting Dusky Cloud, relayed this message over to the rest of the gang, “It wasn’t him.”

“There’s another guy there,” Young Master Han offered, “That really wants to kill Silver Moon. He seems to be originally from Past Deeds, so it might be his group.”

“That guy could also be considered to be on our side!” War Without Wounds said.

Young Master Han furrowed his brows as he asked Gu Fei, “If there’s someone following us, yet people at the back like us don’t know of it, how did those people from the front learn of it before us?”

Gu Fei shrugged his shoulders to express his confusion as well.

“Perhaps Silver Moon is already aware of our intention,” Brother Assist opined.

“There’s no need for him to be aware of our intention; he would probably think of it even if he used his knee to think. But if this is something he planned, why did he let Miles be the one doing the work?” That would be of no help to him at all! No matter how intelligent Young Master Han was, he would have no way of knowing that Silver Moon had actually shot himself in the foot here and was currently stewing in his own juice!

“Since that scum is hanging around Oathless Sword and

company, we might have difficulties getting this job done,” Sword Demon said. Assassinating their temporary mercenary comrade in front of Oathless Sword would truly be far too unprofessional.

“At least, we now know where he is!” Brother Assist expressed. To them, the most valuable take back from Gu Fei’s trip was discovering Silver Moon’s hiding place. This was something Silver Moon had missed in his hurry to resolve the threat to his life.

“Forget it. Just go and do what they asked! Any men following this expedition probably have a bone to pick with Silver Moon, so go easy on them depending on how the situation plays out,” Young Master Han said.

“You guys aren’t coming along?” Gu Fei was surprised.

“Youthful Reflection has informed me that they only asked for your specific help this time; we won’t get paid more if the rest of us choose to help, so what’s the point of going?” Young Master Han stretched his back and yawned.

“I’m going, then.” Gu Fei did not really mind this. He was just about to leave the battalion when a large pack of players approached him. The woman leading this pack was the very lady who had berated Oathless Sword harshly during the mercenary gathering back in the tavern days ago: Gu Xiaoshang.

“Thousand Miles Drunk! We’re tagging along with you,” the lady shouted as she strode toward him.

“Oh...” Young Master Han realized what was going on. “They had men waiting here for you. No wonder they’re reassured with just sending Miles alone. They’ve got a supervisor!” Young Master Han always spoke his mind, completely ignoring the fact that the person he was talking about was just standing right in front of him. Gu Xiaoshang glanced briefly at Young Master Han before ignoring him outright as she addressed Gu Fei, “Let’s go!”

Gu Fei nodded his head and followed the pack of mercenaries to

detach from the main body. They did not go anywhere in particular and only stayed where they were to wait for the potential stalkers behind.

“Stealth,” Gu Xiaoshang ordered with a wave of her arm. Since the men she had brought with her were all Thieves, when they entered Stealth, only she and Gu Fei were left standing in the middle of the road.

“The name’s Gu Xiaoshang,” Gu Xiaoshang introduced herself.

“Mhm. Thousand Miles Drunk.” Although this lady called him by his IGN just then, he felt that a formal introduction was currently in order.

“Heard you’re really powerful,” Gu Xiaoshang remarked.

“I’m pretty good!” Gu Fei agreed.

“That’s not very humble.” Gu Xiaoshang laughed.

“That is me being humble.” Gu Fei chuckled, saying, “Won’t I be insulting everyone if I insist that I am nothing much, given the position I am in?”

“Heh!” Gu Xiaoshang chuckled as well as she pulled out a greatsword from her dimensional pocket and held it before herself. Her tangerine-colored Warrior’s armor was not curated like the average female players’, but she still managed to appear particularly breathtaking due to the orange cape, which was fluttering in the breeze, draped on her shoulder.

Seeing that Gu Fei’s eyes were drawn to the cape, Gu Xiaoshang laughed. “What do you think? Cool, huh?”

Gu Fei laughed as well. “The cape is indeed cool, but it’s cumbersome in a fight!” Although a cape was stylish, it was nothing but a large piece of cloth that flapped about with every action during a fight – there was just no telling when it would wrap itself on to an arm or a leg. It was wholly impractical. Actually, Gu Fei’s Midnight Spirit Robe was also not ideal to wear when

performing moves. After all, it was not designed for kung fu. This was especially true for the hem of this robe that reached to the ground; it was constantly getting in the way of doing things. Fireball's method of unbuttoning the robe was a solution to this, so Gu Fei had half the mind to wear his clothes like that. But it was just as what Fireball had said: his innershirt was simply too ugly. It was best if he got something newer before he changed the way he wore the robe.

"I can take it off when the fighting begins!" Gu Xiaoshang's hand went to her neck and gave it a good tug, causing the cape to fall off her shoulders as she gestured to Gu Fei, "Look how convenient it is."

"It's tied by your neck? Wouldn't you be choked by it?" Gu Fei was startled.

"Nope! You see, this cape has two buckles, so I can fasten it on my shoulders. I only tied the cape around my neck to secure it more firmly. This is specially designed for my armor. What do you think? Are you interested?" Gu Xiaoshang asked.

"I'm good!" Gu Fei smiled.

"Come look for me any time you wanna do something like this. I know a player who picked up the Tailor crafting profession in Yunduan City, but what's amazing is that he actually knows how to tailor and sew in reality; his skills are exceptionally good—"

"We've got company!" Gu Fei exclaimed.

"Where?" Gu Xiaoshang immediately braced her greatsword before her.

"Oh, my bad. I was mistaken," Gu Fei corrected himself.

"Oh!" Gu Xiaoshang stuck the greatsword back to the ground as she carefully did her cape up once more. Gu Fei was speechless. While this person had a gruff temperament, she was absolutely a woman.

“Speaking of which, how do you counter Stealth?” Gu Xiaoshang asked.

“Killing intent,” Gu Fei honestly replied.

“Killing intent?” Gu Xiaoshang was nonplussed.

“Yup. I am a kung fu practitioner, so I’m rather sensitive to this sort of things,” Gu Fei explained.

“Are you for real?” Gu Xiaoshang asked.

“Of course.”

“Then, teach me!” Gu Xiaoshang requested.

“It’s not possible for you to learn it without spending decades of training,” Gu Fei rejected.

“You can’t fool me; I think you’re kidding!” Gu Xiaoshang said with certainty.

Gu Fei gave her a wry smile. “I’m being honest.”

Gu Xiaoshang naturally did not believe him, but just as she was about to voice her doubt, she saw Gu Fei suddenly lose his smiling countenance and pull out a sword from his dimensional pocket. “They’re here.”

“Where?!”

“They are in Stealth right in front of us!” Gu Fei had already lifted his hand. “Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno! Arise!”

“Ah! Don’t kill them all? Leave some for questioning!” Gu Xiaoshang quipped.

“Got it. Call your men to stop staring at me and get to work,” Gu Fei retorted.

Chapter 316 - A Heuristic Approach

It was not easy for Thieves in Stealth to get into formation. Since they were unable to see one another and even the slightest brush would reveal them, Thieves had to be careful when working in a team. The design of Parallel World was not complex and was actually simpler in certain ways than the other MMOs, but because it was a fully immersive game, plenty of things that they were doing required a certain level of knowledge before they could be properly executed.

There was no need to go into details about how these Thieves achieved this, but what mattered was that none of them had revealed themselves in the process. Instead, it was Gu Xiaoshang who curiously asked Gu Fei, “Where’s your spell?”

“My casting time is a bit on the slow side.” Just as Gu Fei said this, flames sprouted in a large area before them, revealing five Thieves instantly.

Gu Fei had covertly released this spell, and since the enemy Thieves were not expecting their Stealth to be seen through, none of them was on guard against this, so that one spell got them all. Gu Fei raised his hand and pointed his sword toward another direction. “Descending Wheel of Flames! Descend!”

Before that flame wheel even appeared, three Thieves were already seen fleeing from its AOE.

They had no choice but to cancel their Stealth! Their movement speed while under Stealth was just too slow, so they would have no way of escaping the spell’s AOE with it. They were already exposed, anyway, so they might as well avoid taking any unnecessary damage.

Gu Fei made sure to cast his spells with his non-dominant hand, so those two AOE spells he had just unleashed did not have much damage in them. The eight Thieves that got revealed were all in a

daze, uncertain of how they had exposed themselves.

Gu Xiaoshang strode forward with unparalleled confidence, her left hand lightly undoing her cape's buckles as the wind easily blew it off her shoulders – the word stylish was not enough to describe this entire sequence.

“Who are you guys?” Gu Xiaoshang’s right hand gripped the greatsword that was stabbed in the ground as she gruffly asked.

Gu Fei lightly came by and whispered, “Your cape got blown far away.”

Gu Xiaoshang hurriedly turned to look and saw that her cape had indeed gone fluttering with the strong breeze. However, she did not get flustered as she cried out toward the direction where the wind was blowing. In that instant, a Thief beside her revealed himself and chased after that cape with Fleetfoot. Everyone was dumbfounded... It was rare to find a lady that played it cool with such commitment.

“Ahem...” Gu Fei cleared his throat, drawing everyone’s attention back to the matter at hand.

Gu Xiaoshang raised her arm. “Surround them.”

The eight men were naturally very surprised by this. All they saw before them were three players, and one of them had even gone chasing after the cape. Of course, from the way that Thief had revealed himself to chase after the cape, these eight realized that there must be more than one Thief with them right now.

The eight men instantly went back to back in a circle, flurrying their daggers in the air to prevent the Thieves in Stealth from using Backstab on them.

“Just who the hell are you guys?” Gu Xiaoshang asked once more.

They did not reply.

“Who are you all looking for?” Gu Fei took a heuristic approach to his questioning as he wondered on how he would go easy on them if these eight men were truly looking for Silver Moon, yet not one of them spoke up. This made the two of them unsure of how to proceed. Gu Fei definitely needed to find out the opposing party’s identity, while Gu Xiaoshang came along with the intention of learning the reason behind these men’s action.

“If you’re not gonna say a word, we’re gonna have to kill you all,” Gu Xiaoshang threatened.

The enemy Thief facing them revealed a scornful expression as he asked Gu Xiaoshang, “Kill us? How many guys do you have?”

“Mmm? How many do you think?” Gu Xiaoshang smiled.

“Heh!” The man laughed derisively before abruptly shouting, “Omni-directional Whitestone!”

Gu Fei and Gu Xiaoshang were stupefied, as they had never heard of this skill before.

The eight Thieves, who had their backs against one another, each took out a small pouch from their dimensional pockets and tossed them in various directions. White dust and pebbles spilled out from the pouches, creating a cloud of white fog around them. In that instant, the Thieves surrounding the eight men were all revealed as their bodies got covered in a layer of that stuff.

Gu Xiaoshang had a level 4 mercenary group with eighty members. Ten Thieves were in the group, but two of them were ladies who did not have the guts to cross the crevasses in the Oolong Mountain Range and went back to Yunduan City. One of them had yet to return from chasing after the cape that had gone flying. In short, there were only seven Thieves present and they were currently covered in layers of dust and totally exposed.

“He he he! This is the Whitestone Dust that our Baishi City produces! I bet you’ve never seen this before!” The Thief was very

pleased with himself. Sweeping his gaze on the people around them, he saw that there were only seven Thieves, Gu Fei, and Gu Xiaoshang. With only a difference of one player, the man believed that the other side did not hold any huge advantage in this confrontation, which made him chuckle. “You call this a gank?”

Gu Xiaoshang had already called for reinforcement from Oathless Sword, as none of them had expected that many enemy players were stalking them – they had only assumed that two or three players at most would be chasing after them. Gu Xiaoshang’s current objective was to stall for time and she had no wish to fight with these enemies.

“What do you guys really intend to do?” Gu Xiaoshang strove to prolong their conversation.

“Let’s not waste time and break out of this encirclement quickly.” The Thief did not bother replying to Gu Xiaoshang and merely turned around to instruct his comrades. He then activated his Fleetfoot and darted to engage a random Thief. The others immediately followed behind him and ran in the same direction.

When Gu Xiaoshang saw the enemies blitzing the weakest member of the seven Thieves present, she realized, to her great astonishment, that the enemies had appraised everyone in the time that she was stalling for time and picked out the weakest link in their encirclement....

“This—” Gu Xiaoshang turned around to address Gu Fei, yet she could not find him. When she turned to face their opponents once more, she saw Gu Fei already in front of the enemy Thief, who seemed to be in charge of the opposing side. Gu Fei’s sword in hand lashed out in a blazing red arc, killing the Thief right there and then. Stunned by his display of power, the seven remaining enemies stopped in their tracks and subconsciously backed away to distance themselves from Gu Fei.

Gu Fei did not have a choice at this point. Had he managed to

confirm their identities, he would have covertly helped them break out of their encirclement and would not even have struck so heavy-handedly the way he just did. However, these men were stubbornly refusing to say a word about anything, and as a responsible mercenary, Gu Fei could obviously not let them escape just like that.

A dark, purple sword, a black mage robe, and the ability to insta-kill with Twin Incineration... These were characteristics that allowed others to identify the now famous Gu Fei. The seven men gawked for a brief moment before coming back to their senses and exclaiming, “Thousand Miles Drunk!”

“Hmm... Do you guys know me?” Gu Fei asked.

“You’re that OP guy from the video...” they mumbled.

“So you guys know who you’re dealing with now, huh! Quickly tell us who sent you, what you’re doing here, where you’re from, where you’re going, and what your intentions are for following us! Spit them all out!” Gu Xiaoshang had come over by now.

The seven men looked at one another, not speaking a word. Gu Fei was also in a bit of a pickle. This was when an idea came to him and he casually asked one of them, “What’s your name?”

“Wild Boar....”

“That’s a pretty dumb name...” Gu Xiaoshang could not help but laugh. Gu Fei, however, did not have this thought and he hurriedly added him as a friend. If they had problems speaking about the matter aloud, a private conversation would surely do the trick! In the end, all he got was the system prompt: [Player Wild Boar is not accepting any friend requests at the moment.]

Gu Fei’s hands were tied now, so he could only probe, “Wild Boar, are you guys looking for someone since you’re tailing us this closely? Is something the matter? If you’re looking for someone for some private matter, give us his name and we’ll get him out here.

There's no need to complicate things and kill one another like this! Am I right, Xiaoshang?"

"That's right!" Gu Xiaoshang nodded her head. "If this is truly the case, why can't we just talk this through?"

"Even if you have a feud with someone in our contingent here, I'm sure we can all sit down together and negotiate a proper solution for everyone!" Gu Fei felt that this was the extent of his heuristic approach.

"That's right! Let's sit down and negotiate!" Gu Xiaoshang concurred.

The seven men were still not speaking a word. Gu Fei facepalmed as he flicked his free hand. "I'm out of ideas. Do whatever you want, but don't say I didn't try to help you guys." With that, Gu Fei stepped away to eat an apple.

This is actually a hint! I'm out of mana now, so you guys better use this opportunity to run away! Gu Fei felt that since he had already discovered these players, it should more or less be considered as him managing to intervene in their tracking and technically fulfilling the given task. He did not have the responsibility to apprehend them after!

Apparently, these men did not receive Gu Fei's hint at all as they remained standing in that circle like idiots. Gu Fei finished his apple and his mana was back to full. Gu Xiaoshang spent that time standing on the side and persuading them to divulge information. Eventually, her cape was brought back to her and no longer said another word.

"Forget it!" Gu Xiaoshang ran out of patience and waved to Gu Fei, "Miles, kill them!"

"Why must I be the one to kill them?" Gu Fei asked absentmindedly.

"With your fearsome ability, who else but you can do it?" Gu

Xiaoshang asked back.

“Actually, with the mana I currently have, I don’t think I can insta-kill so many of them,” Gu Fei secretly admitted to Gu Xiaoshang.

“Don’t b*llsh*t me; that video showed you killing off more than twenty people!” Gu Xiaoshang retorted.

“Something like killing people is a matter of providence!” Gu Fei said.

“What nonsense are you spouting?” Gu Xiaoshang asked.

“The video only depicted my fleeting moments of excellence, where my enemies happened to engage me when I was in tip-top shape. They essentially edited out all those times when I was out of mana,” Gu Fei explained.

“That’s too much! How could they do that?!” Gu Xiaoshang exclaimed.

“That’s right! They are really too irresponsible,” Gu Fei agreed.

“You should’ve posted a thread explaining the matter,” Gu Xiaoshang admonished.

“Explain? What’s there to explain?”

“To tell people not to believe the falseness depicted in the video, of course!”

“But it wasn’t falsified! It’s just a compilation of my best moments.”

“That won’t do either; that’s not real!”

“I guess—”

“Hey, hey! You two!” Someone finally interrupted their hushed conversation.

“What?” Both of them turned to face the man who had spoken.

“Are we doing it or not?” the Thief from Gu Xiaoshang’s

mercenary group asked.

“Of course, we’re attacking!” Gu Xiaoshang quickly said as she pointed to Gu Fei, “And that includes you!”

Gu Fei sighed deeply as he waved his sword to point at those men, “This is your final chance; we’re gonna kill you all if you guys don’t tell us anything!”

With how these men were all tightly huddled together, Gu Fei could kill them all with one move. This was what providence meant!

“Can we really leave if we tell you the truth?” one of them suddenly asked.

“HEY!” someone beside the man immediately glared at him for saying that.

“I don’t wanna drop a level!” The man leaped away from the other seven men.

Chapter 317 - The Death of Silver Moon

Gu Fei and Gu Xiaoshang dumbly watched the internal conflict that took hold of the seven men before them. Neither of them had expected for such a situation to occur, instantly making them feel really awkward, as though they were forcing these good men to do something incorrigible. The six Thieves were already exploding with anger as they bellowed, “You’ll be the first one to lose your level!” They then surrounded the traitor and six daggers flashed out in unison. White light shone from within the encirclement after – a clear indication to everyone present that the traitor had not met a good ending.

The six men proceeded to face Gu Fei and Gu Xiaoshang once more, their eyes shining in defiance, “Come and kill us if you can! The jury’s still out on who will be the one doing the dying!”

“Forget it. Just leave!” Gu Xiaoshang suddenly said.

The six men, including Gu Fei and her underlings, were all stunned.

“What do you mean?” Gu Fei asked Gu Xiaoshang.

“I was only looking to scare them a bit and yet they have shown to not be in the least bit afraid, we’ll just take it as our loss,” Gu Xiaoshang replied.

“Oh...” Gu Fei shrugged his shoulders and did not say anything else.

“Leave. Otherwise, it’ll be too late,” Gu Xiaoshang told the six Thieves.

The six of them showed hesitation on what they should do.

When Gu Fei saw their hesitation he could not help but wonder, You hesitate to answer our questions and also hesitate when we’re letting you off. Just what do we have to do for you to shake that skepticism off?! Gu Fei drew out two flaming arcs in the air,

“Leave. Otherwise, I’ll make my move.”

The six men turned around doubtfully. Gu Xiaoshang clapped her hands and the three Thieves stepped aside to give them a way out. At the same time, a flurry of footsteps could be heard coming from behind Gu Fei and Gu Xiaoshang as their reinforcement appeared a good distance away. Gu Xiaoshang impatiently stamped her feet, “Hurry!”

The six men no longer hesitated and scrambled off as fast as they could.

Gu Fei turned to watch their reinforcement’s arrival. Youthful Reflection, who was taking the lead, brought along an assorted score of comrades, staring at the six Thieves making their heroic escape. He quickly asked, “How did they get away?”

“I told you guys to hurry. All of you were too slow, so we didn’t manage to stop them from escaping,” Gu Xiaoshang reasoned.

“Weren’t there only eight Thieves? Couldn’t you even block them for a little longer?” Youthful Reflection was suspicious.

“I didn’t manage to stop any of them and that’s all there is to it; why are you asking so many nonsensical questions?” Gu Xiaoshang was visibly annoyed by this.

Women! They were all natural-born actors. Gu Xiaoshang looked so calm even when she said all this! Youthful Reflection, would you ever suspect that she had intentionally let those men off? As Gu Fei thought this, Youthful Reflection unexpectedly changed target. “Miles bro, it’s just eight Thieves. Surely, you could’ve made an effort to stop them?”

Gu Fei froze up, as Gu Xiaoshang nervously glanced at him. Gu Fei gave this reply with arched eyebrows, “My stomach coincidentally ached at that moment, so I didn’t manage to stop them.”

Suddenly being the focus of everyone’s attention, Gu Fei was

unable to conjure up any convincing excuse. It was obvious that he was lying, so Youthful Reflection glared at him hatefully. Youthful Reflection could not even give chase as he did not even manage to find any trace of the Thieves. He turned to ask Gu Xiaoshang, “So what did they plan to do?”

Gu Xiaoshang helplessly answered, “I don’t know. They didn’t reveal anything even when we beat them to death.”

Youthful Reflection heaved a sigh, feeling helpless at their situation. “Let’s hurry back, then!”

Youthful Reflection brought all his men to rejoin the rest of the battalion as fast as they could. They were all members of Traversing Four Seas, and being away from the rest of their fellow members made them feel uneasy. They felt as though the whole world was out to assassinate them, preventing them from completing their guild quest. At that moment, not one of them wanted to travel with Gu Fei and the rest of the mercenaries, and they seized this chance to chase after the expedition’s main body.

With Youthful Reflection’s departure, Gu Xiaoshang finally sighed in relief and faced Gu Fei, “Thanks a lot!”

“What for?”

“I’m thanking your stomach for hurting... Although that’s a really lousy excuse,” Gu Xiaoshang remarked.

“I’m not good at lying,” Gu Fei said, saying, “Anyway, aren’t you close with Traversing Four Seas? Why didn’t you tell them the truth?”

“Rules still have to be followed even when we are close... If I told them that I let the enemies escape, they might dock my commission; I gotta at least make sure my men could make a living with me, after all!” Gu Xiaoshang explained.

They all chatted while hurrying to catch up with the rest of the group, but since the Warrior Gu Xiaoshang was among them and

they could not possibly abandon her, they had slight difficulties catching up. Thankfully, Oathless Sword, as the leader, was able to command the expedition to slow down the pace, all to take care of his beloved lady, which allowed Gu Fei and the others to slowly but surely make up for the distance between them and the main body.

Youthful Reflection had long since rejoined the battalion by now, and Oathless Sword came forward to ask him for an update. Silver Moon stood by the side without making another sound, yet his heart was actually beating in trepidation.

“They escaped,” Youthful Reflection reported, “Those guys already ran off by the time my men came to their aid.”

“How is that possible? Wasn’t there just eight Thieves? With Thousand Miles Drunk there, how did they escape?” Silver Moon was shocked.

“He said he had a stomach ache, then,” Youthful Reflection shrugged helplessly.

“And you guys believed that?” Silver Moon turned his gaze at everyone.

Obviously, no one believed that. This sort of lie was the most infuriating, though, as it was blatantly made up, yet they had no recourse to pursue it.

“I’m sure there’s more to this as to why Thousand Miles Drunk let them escape,” Silver Moon said. He was already convinced that those men were looking for him. Perhaps, Gu Fei had already betrayed Silver Moon’s position from that meeting alone. Could it be that they already had Sharpshooters hiding nearby waiting to perforate him with Snipes?

“You can question Gu Xiaoshang when she gets back,” Youthful Reflection said to Oathless Sword.

“I’ll do it right now.” Oathless Sword immediately sent Gu Xiaoshang a message.

Silver Moon had already started making himself as inconspicuous as possible as among the crowd. He really wished he could have his three Guardians with Bulwark of Imprisonment protect him, but they were unfortunately assigned to guard the NPC Todd by Traversing Four Seas right now. Oathless Sword and his men also feared that some Sharpshooters were hiding nearby and were looking to end their quest with a well-placed Snipe. As such, Silver Moon did not have even the slightest sense of security right now, and as Oathless Sword and Gu Xiaoshang conversed with each other, he did not stop thinking, To run or not to run? If I do run away, where should I go?

This was when Oathless Sword announced, “Xiaoshang said Thousand Miles Drunk is fine; he just had a stomach ache back then....”

“He’s faking it! He’s sure to be faking it!” Silver Moon insisted.

Oathless Sword neither confirmed nor denied this, not wanting to suspect his sweetheart of anything. Meanwhile, Gu Xiaoshang pointed at Gu Fei when her conversation with Oathless Sword ended. “Hey, those guys are really suspicious of you. Told you your excuse is really lousy! Be thankful that this informant here is on your side right now!”

“Woman, aren’t I carrying your guilt here?” Gu Fei asked, instead.

“Why so serious?! I’ll give you a cut of our commission when we get back,” Gu Xiaoshang said.

“Wouldn’t your men have thoughts about this?” Gu Fei turned his gaze over to the rest of the Thieves.

“Any thoughts?” Gu Xiaoshang turned to address them.

“Nope! None at all!” they hurriedly replied. Their reaction was quite a shock to Gu Fei. He considered himself to be someone that had seen all types of characters in this game, but Gu Xiaoshang was

pretty much the only leader he knew that could exert such an aura as a boss. Oathless Sword, Brave Surge, Dusky Cloud, and even Silver Moon would never openly show condescension in front of their men like she had just done.

Back to the main body, Oathless Sword no longer cared to pursue the matter, which left Silver Moon at a loss on what to do next. One thing he was sure was that there was no way for a handful of Thieves to get past Gu Fei. That poor excuse of having a stomach ache was clearly to cover his act of going easy on those men, which meant that they knew one another. Undoubtedly, those men must be part of Dusky Cloud's team. Having come face to face with him, Silver Moon was certain that his position had already been revealed to the enemies by now. There was even a good chance that a bunch of assassins was heading toward him right now. He had to run. He must run.

Silver Moon had already decided to slip away, and this battalion of men was perfect for him to do so. One player disappearing among this sea of men should not rouse any suspicion. This was his plan of escape. As for the next step... He would think about it after he extricated himself from this predicament!

With his mind firmly made up, Silver Moon began to take note of the surrounding terrain and the actions of the players around him. The troops ahead were just about to circle around a copse. This was a perfect chance for him to slip away, as everyone would be focusing on the road ahead.

Silver Moon slowed down his step when he neared the small copse of trees, acting as though nothing was out of the ordinary, and gradually detached himself from the mass of players. With that, he casually stood by the big tree he had his eye on for quite some time and began to pretend foraging for something at the base of the tree. This was a normal action that players did – as some players, who had chosen crafting professions, discovered that certain medicinal herbs and such could be easily gathered by doing

this – so as long as he was not holding up the expedition, no one would question his action.

Silver Moon's heart was beating wildly, and the footfalls of the players mimicked the thudding of his heart. He crooked his head left and right to look around. Only when he saw that no one was taking note of his action did Silver Moon stand up, turn around, and hide behind the tree.

This tree was enough to block anyone's vision, so Silver Moon was extremely satisfied by his choice. He felt much at ease when his act of hiding behind the tree did not alert anyone. What he had to do now was to quietly wait for the entire battalion to pass before sneaking away. As for what he would do next? That was a problem he would have to carefully consider.

As Silver Moon pondered on, the stragglers of the entire battalion slowly passed him.

Looks like it's time for me to slip away, Silver Moon thought to himself. He moved away from the tree and looked toward the main road that lay behind him for a moment, before turning back to head deeper into the woods....

He only took two steps forward when he felt a heavy blow connecting to the back of his head. Silver Moon instantly lost his ability to move or speak, and he mentally bemoaned this turn of event, Crap! Bludgeon!

“Who’s there?!?” Silver Moon would have wanted to ask this, but he unfortunately would never know the answer as a combination of attacks directed at his back insta-killed him.

Dusky Cloud, who had been camping out by the Knights' Barracks received a message: “Package delivered. Enjoy your killing. Send me however much you feel is appropriate.”

Chapter 318 - The Implications of Dying

The Thief Dusky Cloud was waiting by the Knights' Barracks in Stealth mode. He wanted to be the first one to begin the process of killing Silver Moon. Just as he received the message, white light flashed and a Knight in gaudy armor appeared inside this spawn point. Who else could the man be but Silver Moon?

Silver Moon did not know what to think right now, but his actions and expression did not betray him losing his cool. The instant he respawned inside the Knights' Barracks, he started observing his surroundings very closely. Dusky Cloud felt vexed when he saw how Silver Moon was behaving. The target was in such proximity with him, yet it was hardly that easy to kill Silver Moon, much less wipe him down to level 10. This was going to be a protracted fight that would expend so much manpower and effort. Dusky Cloud suddenly regretted his actions. Was it worth disrupting so many players' gaming lives just to torment this person like so?

At the same time, back in the jungle, Gu Fei was gawking at Svelte Dancer, "Why are you here, too?"

Gu Fei had also used the same method Silver Moon had employed to get behind the tree, except Silver Moon made his move when the battalion had reached that copse of trees, while Gu Fei came in from outside beyond the copse. Unbeknown to Silver Moon, his most feared reaper of death, Gu Fei, was actually only separated to him by just one tree. By the time Sword Demon's Bludgeon struck Silver Moon in the back of his head, Gu Fei had teleported himself right behind Silver Moon using Blink and ruthlessly stabbed him. At the same time, another person plunged a blade into Silver Moon, and that person was none other than Svelte Dancer.

"I'm the only one who has movement speed that can keep up with everyone even while in Stealth," Svelte Dancer replied.

“So you’ve been keeping an eye on Silver Moon this whole time?” Gu Fei asked.

Sword Demon shrugged his shoulders helplessly. “I’ve got no choice. I just don’t have the movement speed.”

Silver Moon had sneakily left the main body by pretending to gather herbs from this tree, not knowing that a Rogue in Stealth was actually standing beside him and watching his every move all this while. Oathless Sword could also be credited for making this happen. The slower pace he set for the entire expedition for Gu Xiaoshang to catch up to them actually allowed Svelte Dancer in Stealth to close in on Silver Moon.

The three left the copse and quickly joined the battalion. The other men of Young Master’s Elite that were hanging around the back of the pack naturally received the news about the successful assassination of Silver Moon. Svelte Dancer reached her hand out to Young Master Han. “Pay up!”

Young Master Han actually dismissively waved her off. “I have yet to get paid myself. I’ll pass your share to you once we reach Linyin City.”

Svelte Dancer did not badger him any further and merely left to find the Amethyst Rebirth ladies. Young Master Han announced to Gu Fei and Sword Demon, “Silver Moon has been sent back to the Knights’ Barracks in Baishi City, and Dusky Cloud already caught sight of him. That concludes our current mission. Everyone may now applaud.”

The others rolled their eyes.

“Record our contribution points,” Young Master Han told Sword Demon.

Sword Demon took out the booklet he was using to record Young Master’s Elite’s contribution points and awarded everyone points accordingly. Royal God Call and War Without Wounds were rather

disgruntled, as neither of them had active participation in this mission, only acquiring some sympathy points for their presence. As Gu Fei watched Sword Demon record the points, he asked Young Master Han, “It makes sense for Royal and Wounds to only get 10 points each, but why are you the one receiving the highest points when it was Sword Demon and I who have performed the mission? 30 points for ‘orchestration’? What did you orchestrate?”

“Did you really think we were merely waiting for Silver Moon to leave the battalion to strike?” Young Master Han asked sarcastically.

“Wasn’t that what happened?”

“Don’t you think Silver Moon needed a reason to leave first?”

“Are you saying you caused Silver Moon to leave? Didn’t he leave because he’s afraid of those Thieves in Stealth being after him?” Gu Fei asked.

“Absolutely.”

“And you have a hand in that?”

“I hired those men,” Young Master Han stated.

Gu Fei was stunned. He turned to look at the other four and saw that each of them seemed to be aware of this particular information as they gazed at him sympathetically.

“Why didn’t I know this?” Gu Fei asked.

Young Master Han did not bother to answer him; instead, it was Brother Assist who patted Gu Fei. “Everyone already discussed all this early in the morning; you just happened to be offline.” With that, he turned to Sword Demon. “Should we deduct 5 or 10 points from Miles for his failure to turn up for the meeting?”

“Logically speaking, yes. But he wasn’t online, so...” Sword Demon was hesitant.

“No excuses. Deduct 10 points,” Young Master Han declared.

"Indeed, deduct 10 points off of him," War Without Wounds and Royal God Call immediately voiced their agreement.

Whether his attendance mattered when he was online or otherwise was [a similar argument as an offside call on the soccer field](#). Seeing the majority in favor of it and Gu Fei himself not really minding it either way, Sword Demon went ahead and deducted 10 points off of him.

Gu Fei was still pondering on this so-called 'orchestration'. "Since you're the one who hired those men, why didn't you say a word when I set out to stop them? What would you've done if I had killed them all?"

"Didn't I tell you to go easy on them if they're after Silver Moon before you left?" Young Master Han asked.

"How would I know if they're after Silver Moon or not?"

"You ask them, of course!"

"I did, but they didn't say a peep. Someone wanted to reveal it, but his comrades actually killed him before he could," Gu Fei said.

Young Master Han was surprised by this revelation, painfully bemoaning to the others after a moment, "How unfortunate! A true tragedy! Look at how professional that mercenary group is and look at yourselves. Each of you claims to be an expert, yet each of you will easily betray your comrades just for a little benefit; the treachery and lack of honor... Don't you guys feel the least bit ashamed of yourselves?"

"You're insane." Everyone scoffed at Young Master Han.

In the end, it was still Brother Assist who patiently explained the entirety of their plan to Gu Fei. Since Silver Moon was aware that Dusky Cloud's team and another group were after him, he was sure to be paranoid as he journeyed on. Thus, Young Master Han randomly hired a mercenary group in Baishi City to send some Thieves to tail the battalion of men from Yunduan City.

Young Master Han had intended to use Gu Fei's well-known ability to counter Stealth to inform Youthful Reflection about the men secretly following them and sow suspicion in Silver Moon, but Traversing Four Seas had ended up discovering the men first.

Against their hidden stalkers that no one could detect, Young Master Han was confident that Traversing Four Seas would seek Gu Fei's help. However, they were apparently holding such deep resentment toward their dependence on Gu Fei time and time again. Instead of seeking the help of Gu Fei who was proven to have a counter for Stealth, they sought the aid of Sakurazaka Moony's team of trappers. In any case, Young Master Han had also prepared for such an eventuality. He only had to inform the men he had hired about the traps and those Hunters would fail to ambush them no matter how hard they tried, leaving Oathless Sword no other options but to look for Gu Fei.

In the end, everything had gone even smoother than what he had planned; Sakurazaka Moony faked having a stomach ache once he caught sight of Silver Moon, which allowed Gu Fei to pick up the reins. The other players whom Oathless Sword trusted accompanying Gu Fei fitted Young Master Han's intentions perfectly as well.

Instead, the unexpected high level of professionalism of the mercenary group Young Master Han had hired was what almost ruined his plan. With those players keeping their mouth shut, they would naturally be beaten to death by Gu Fei and would subsequently result into Silver Moon not running away. It might even have the opposite effect and give Silver Moon a sense of security, instead.

Fortunately, everything went back on track in accordance to Young Master Han's plan. With those stalkers clearly escaping with their lives intact, Silver Moon's suspicions only grew to the point where he no longer wished to risk staying within the safety of the crowd. Opting to abandon his underlings once more, he ran

off into the sunset.

As such, Young Master's Elite had managed to achieve the two conditions necessary for Silver Moon to act. Silver Moon abandoned his men once more and was sent into the snapping maws of Dusky Cloud alone, essentially making it impossible for him to garner any external aid for his escape. In such a situation, Silver Moon would have no way of escaping with his men even if he wished to, as his men were no longer with him. Using those three Guardians assigned to protect Todd as examples; they were quite possibly the most important three players that upheld the guild quest of Traversing Four Seas, so the guild would simply not allow the three to leave.

Of course, Young Master's Elite would have to take care of Silver Moon in secret, so they made sure to keep Silver Moon in the dark about their involvement. This was a MMO, after all; there was no way to silence anyone with death alone. Despite his death, Silver Moon would still be able to tattle to Traversing Four Seas about Young Master's Elite's role in his demise. Therefore, the men of Young Master's Elite were very careful to not leave any evidence behind for Silver Moon to use as leverage. With how serious this quest was for Traversing Four Seas, using a feeble excuse of Gu Fei killing off Silver Moon because of the latter 'stepping on his foot' would not float well with Oathless Sword and the rest.

Thus, Silver Moon's assassination was smoothly carried out, with implications to boot. His killers could not be incriminated for their actions, while Silver Moon himself had no way of receiving any help at all. He might even have difficulties getting Traversing Four Seas to help him because he would then have to explain why he chose to sneak off like he did. Unpacking this can of worms might clue the guild's core members in on his intention to borrow their strength to fend off the four-thousand-strong Ten Guild Alliance and his plan to use the ensuing confusion to escape from their clutches.

All that was left now was the contest of patience between Dusky Cloud and Silver Moon, which was already something outside of Young Master Han's considerations.

As the mercenaries continued their way with the rest of the battalion, they incessantly sent messages of encouragement to Dusky Cloud. "Looking forward to hear 'good news' about your killing..."

Eventually, at 10:37 P.M., almost an hour after Silver Moon's first death that had sent him over to the Knights' Barracks in Baishi City, Dusky Cloud sent them a glum reply: "That b*st*rd has actually been squatting in the spawn point for over an hour now. That m*th*rf*ck*r, that asshole, surely knows that we are looking to block him within, so he's looking to waste our time with this."

"You've got numbers on your side; what's there to be afraid of?! Grind his time out slowly! Good luck!" Young Master's Elite sent forth these words of encouragement to them.

At this time, the continued advancement of the battalion from Yunduan City had come to a halt. What they saw before them was a jungle that spread as far as the eyes could see. Oathless Sword took out the map the system had given them for the quest and pored over it before finally announcing, "Linyin City is somewhere inside this jungle."

"Are you sure? Why has the road ended, then?" Everyone was puzzled by this.

"Logically speaking, there should be one! I've never heard that the road will end abruptly like this!" When Oathless Sword and his men arrived at Baishi City, they already learned that the next leg of their journey would be to Linyin City. Naturally, they also took the time to find out more information about the said city. While they knew that this particular city was situated within a jungle, they were not aware that the road leading into Linyin City would not be there.

“Do you remember the Oolong Mountain Range?” Youthful Reflection asked.

“What about it?”

“There were no crevasses over that mountain pass originally, but because of our guild quest, much of that road got eroded away.”

“So what you mean to say is that there was a proper road here before, but it has temporarily disappeared thanks to our quest?”

“Yup!”

“F*ck! The system really loves creating these problems to waste our time. Everyone, enter the jungle. I doubt we’d lose our way since we have the d*mn coordinates for the city, anyway,” Oathless Sword ordered.

The truth was they had no choice but to enter the jungle. If they did not find Linyin City, would they not have to spend over three hours making their way back to Baishi City just to log out?

It is a rule with regard to a player’s positioning. While not a true offense, any goal that is made from such a position will be disregarded.

Chapter 319 - A Suspicious Trap

The players from Yunduan City reorganized their formation once more before venturing into the jungle. Oathless Sword continued to take the lead, holding the map in hand as he directed everyone toward the indicated coordinates. But after taking several steps forward, he froze up, stared at the coordinates ahead, and compared them with the stated coordinates for Linyin City's location.

Oathless Sword rushed out of the jungle, checked the coordinates again, and ran back in to stare at the coordinates. Finally, he expressed his astonishment, "This entire jungle is a Class 2 map!"

When the players heard of this, they were astonished as well, each of them starting to take note of the coordinates. Running to and fro to the jungle – much like what Oathless Sword just did – the fact that the jungle was a Class 2 map eventually spread among the players like wildfire.

"Class 2 map?" Gu Fei was unfamiliar with this term.

"It is the name for places that have a separate set of coordinates from the map," Brother Assist explained. He felt that his explanation was still a little vague, so he cited examples, "Most caves and the inside of houses have Class 2 maps; each of them having its coordinates."

"Even a house would have different coordinates?" Gu Fei was positive that was untrue. Whenever he did 'Bounty Mission', he mostly found his targets indoors. Therefore, he was certain that the inside of houses had no unique coordinates.

"Well, small-sized houses are still reliant on the coordinates depicted on the world map, but there are slight variations in how things are depicted. For example, (R100,100) is the coordinates for inside the house, while (100,100) is the coordinates for the house's rooftop. Have you not noticed this?" Brother Assist asked.

“Oh.” Gu Fei immediately understood.

“However, for this entire jungle to actually be a Class 2 map... Just what sort of luck do we have to run into such a design?” Brother Assist murmured.

There was nothing really scary about a Class 2 map. In fact, this made it easier to identify the difference between the map coordinates more accurately. The problem was that in their current situation, the map Oathless Sword was using to lead the expedition was a Class 1 map, which the players had colloquially called as the world map. Since the coordinates within the jungle were of the Class 2 map, everyone could not help but suspect that this was the system making things difficult for them once more.

Some quests were not challenging in terms of combat or intellect, so MMOs would often waste players’ time by incorporating those quests with long-distance travels or tedious steps. Obviously, this part of the expedition the Yunduan City players were currently doing belonged in this category. Each of them griped incessantly, with some even expressing their skepticism about the jungle only being a Class 2 map for the quest, much like how the system had eroded the road back in the Oolong Mountain Range.

“Everyone, pipe down!” All had retreated from the jungle by now, cursing loudly, so Oathless Sword had no choice but to step up and control the situation.

His shout was only heard by the first dozen or so players, yet these men dutifully turned to spread the word until everyone knew of this order. The jungle outskirt where their expedition was gathered became quiet.

“Now that we’re aware of our current situation, let me ask everyone; do any of you have friends in Linyin City?!” Oathless Sword shouted. The best way for them to save time was to find a guide that would lead them to the city.

The players began to discuss this among themselves, yet no one

answered. The closest form of discussion that was relevant to the matter was when some players mentioned how they had friends who used to live in Linyin City but later departed from it. Oathless Sword was very surprised by this turn of events, as he had never expected that out of this nearly one thousand-strong crowd, not one player actually had a friend in that city.

“Anyone? Anyone at all? You will be well thanked for your aid!” Oathless Sword did not give up. Originally hoping to play the friendship card, he now decided to offer up a reward. There was a saying that went: ‘A brave soul will step up when a bountiful reward is present’. Oathless Sword was not looking for a brave soul right now, though, but a local, instead.

He swept his gaze through the crowd once more and only found a sea of shaking heads.

Oathless Sword was now blankly staring at Gale Force and Youthful Reflection. Neither of them seemed to have expected such an outcome, as well.

“Well, if that’s the case...” Oathless Sword continued, “I guess we’ll have to rely on ourselves to find the city. Do you all wish to begin our search for the city or do you prefer heading back to Baishi City to rest up for the night and begin inquiring the next day?”

“Let’s search for it now!” everyone shouted. This was a no-brainer. Heading back to Baishi City now would take more than three hours of travel time; they would easily waste another three hours or more getting back here tomorrow. Anyone with half a head on his or her shoulders would naturally choose to push onward now than to come back here tomorrow.

“That settles it, then! We’ll get a lock on the horizontal coordinates of Linyin City from outside the jungle before we venture inward in a straight line. I’m sure we’ll be able to find the city at this rate.” Once Oathless Sword finished saying this, he

began to move and align himself toward the horizontal coordinates for Linyin City. The current plan was to arrive at Linyin City by walking into the jungle in a straight line. They were all rather confident of their ability to keep their bearings straight; after all, they were searching for a city. Just the area of the coordinates itself occupied at least the entire ‘N’ symbol on their mini-map. With their destination being that large, these players were certain that they could locate the city even if they were to stray a little off to the side while inside the jungle.

Thinking of this fact, all stopped their condemnations of the existence of this Class 2 map for the jungle as they courageously set forth into it once more.

A jungle with the atypical Class 2 map category was truly a different breed. The trees were sturdy and densely tangled; these trees were also overgrown from the boundary to the very depths of the jungle.

The battalion advanced in the same formation as before. Traversing Four Seas took the front, while the mercenaries followed closely behind. Young Master’s Elite was once more trailing at the back, and the Amethyst Rebirth ladies were not too far away. Sakurazaka Moony and The Great Hunting were naturally lingering near the ladies. Sakurazaka Moony was currently walking alongside Vast Lushness as he said to her, “It’s really easy to put up traps in places like this. No need to even dig a hole; just toss a bunch of loose leaves, cover up the trap with more detritus, and no one will be able to detect it.”

As he said this, a scream was heard coming from the front of the pack.

That scream sounded exceptionally vivid in this remote jungle; when those at the back asked what had happened, the report from the front that reached them was: “Someone stepped on a trap!”

Their hearts trembled as they each began checking the area

beneath their feet, which thereby led to further questions. “Did the person accidentally step on the trap that someone has forgotten to dismantle? Is the trap intentionally placed?”

There was no answer at the moment. Eventually, Oathless Sword called for the self-proclaimed number one trap expert Sakurazaka Moony to save that man.

Sakurazaka Moony quickly made a beeline for the man.

“Anyone started the timer yet?” Just that first question Sakurazaka Moony asked when he arrived already showed the difference between an expert and a layman. Not one men from Traversing Four Seas had thought of counting how long a trap would last the instant someone stepped on it, causing all of them to stew in their embarrassment.

“Let’s start it now, then!” Sakurazaka Moony said to the men around him as he casually picked up a hefty stick off the ground and dug at the detritus around the trapped man’s foot. There was a thick layer of leaves littering the jungle floor, so their feet might accidentally land in a small hole on the ground if they were not careful. This was precisely why Sakurazaka Moony had told Vast Lushness about how suitable this place was for laying traps.

There was a metallic shine from the jaws of the trap that had snared the man’s foot. Sakurazaka Moony inspected it left and right while the surrounding men watched with bated breath for him to come to some earthshaking conclusion.

“It’s a Hunter’s Trap,” Sakurazaka Moony announced.

“F*CK!” everyone exclaimed in unison. Hunter was currently the only job class that could set up traps like this, so it was rather obvious which job class was responsible for this.

“But I’ve never seen this sort,” Sakurazaka Moony continued.

“What do you mean?” Oathless Sword, who had been standing beside him all this time, asked.

“It’s a lot more intricate; it probably means that the level of this trap is higher than what I’m used to.” Sakurazaka Moony lifted his head to look at the trapped player, “Did you take any damage or are you just unable to move?”

The man said that he was just rendered immobile.

Sakurazaka Moony muttered, “So a higher level trap doesn’t seem to do any damage; I guess there isn’t much point raising this skill’s level!”

The man was mildly annoyed by this, feeling as though Sakurazaka Moony had used him as a guinea pig.

Sakurazaka Moony’s gaze began to turn toward another direction. As everyone’s eyes followed his, he hurriedly shouted, “Don’t stop the timer!” All of them hastily returned their gazes on the man’s right foot. The man started feeling uneasy with many looking at his trapped foot.

Sakurazaka Moony took that stick of his over to another side and began poking around. Soon, he lifted the stick and a trap was slightly exposed on the other end of it.

“There’s another one!” Oathless Sword came over, his brows knitted.

“Timer!” Sakurazaka Moony said to him.

“Where’s the timer?!” Although Oathless Sword came over, the rest were still busy staring at the trapped man’s leg!

“This might not be all!” Sakurazaka Moony proceeded to toss the trap aside as his stick continued to poke and prod with everyone following him closely. Suddenly, a pained shout came from behind him, causing the surrounding players to leap to their feet in surprise. Even Sakurazaka Moony jumped at this. He turned to look backward, only to angrily chide the person, “Are you an idiot? Didn’t you see me toss that trap over there? Why did you step on it?!”

“Isn’t the trap dismantled?” that man glumly asked.

“Bro, is there even a Dismantle skill yet?” Sakurazaka Moony retorted.

The man could only feel ashamed over his lack of gaming knowledge, as Sakurazaka Moony asked, “Did you time it this time?”

All froze up as they once more felt embarrassed at their failure to do so.

“Act like professionals,” Sakurazaka Moony criticized. Everyone could only keep mum and endure his censure. There was no way around this! Trappers were already in the minority, and few of them were skilled. While Sakurazaka Moony proclaimed himself as the number one trap expert in Yunduan City, no one knew who the number two was. It even felt as though no one was competing with him for the top spot, since any high-level Archer chose to advance to a Sharpshooter job class, instead.

Sakurazaka Moony continued to prod and soon managed to pick out another trap. His eyes turned solemn as he said, “It’s very unlikely for three men to forget their traps here... These traps are clearly placed here intentionally. Perhaps, they are even targeting us.”

“Who would do such a thing? Are they players or NPCs?” Youthful Reflection asked.

“Ha ha! It’s over!” The man who had originally fallen for the trap was finally free from it.

“A minute and one second!” Before Sakurazaka Moony could ask, the person counting the time had blurted this out.

“Adding the time we have missed out earlier, it lasted at least over a minute and ten seconds. That’s pretty impressive!” Sakurazaka Moony exclaimed.

“Furthermore, these are clearly placed by players. If they were

NPCs, they would long since reveal themselves," Sakurazaka Moony said as he looked at the people around him.

Chapter 320 - Web of Traps

Sakurazaka Moony continued to poke through the leaves littering the jungle floor as he said to Oathless Sword, “If this person is an expert, he won’t just place the traps haphazardly. Those we’ve found on the jungle floor beneath the detritus could’ve been placed to draw our attention. Perhaps, there is an even more powerful trap waiting for us deeper in the jungle.”

“What would be an even more powerful trap?” Oathless Sword nervously asked.

“Hunting Trap that lasts for even longer,” Sakurazaka Moony answered. Oathless Sword had the strongest urge to slap this man to death.

“Everyone, take care of where you’re stepping to,” Oathless Sword turned back to remind the others. There was really no need for him to say that, as everyone had started watching where they placed their feet the moment they heard that first man’s scream when that trap was triggered.

“Can we continue onward like this?” Oathless Sword asked Sakurazaka Moony.

“The trap itself doesn’t deal damage,” Sakurazaka Moony answered, “It’s only use is to render a target immobile. You’ve seen that their Hunting Trap’s duration can last for over a minute. The current use it has in combat is to complement it with a ranged attack after. If we continue to rush onward without fully grasping our current situation, we may be slowly eaten alive.”

“Can’t we just find all the traps first?” Oathless Sword was staring at the stick Sakurazaka Moony was holding.

“Normally, you would be right, but don’t forget that traps don’t have a mind of their own unlike us, humans. A real trap expert won’t simply set a trap down and wait for the prey to stumble on

it. Not only can a trap limit a person's movement when triggered, it can also be a means to contain a person when not triggered. By choosing to manually search for the traps, our actions are already being controlled by the trappers, so they most likely have something planned against us."

"I know that..." Oathless Sword sighed deeply. Sakurazaka Moony was really such a nag. Even if he did not know much about traps, he at least understood the logic behind the use of traps.

"What I'm trying to say is that the solution to our current situation is not uncovering the many traps they've set up but finding out how many people are out there to get us!" Sakurazaka Moony's voice diminished in volume as he spoke. He then swept his solemn gaze around him once more. The rustling sound of leaves in the jungle complemented Sakurazaka Moony's tone, and everyone involuntarily felt a shiver down their spines as they too began to look around in hopes of knowing just how many people were out there lying in wait for them.

"Let's stop our progress for now. Call the other leaders to gather and discuss our next step," Oathless Sword declared.

The battalion had already come to a halt by now. All the players were patiently waiting for news from the front as they discussed the matter in their respective groups. Suddenly, Gu Fei turned back and shouted, "Someone's here!"

"Who?" Gu Fei's shout was not just heard by Young Master's Elite but also by Oathless Sword and his men despite them being in front of the entire battalion.

Gu Fei fixed his gaze on the direction that they had just passed through. "There's definitely someone there just now."

"Is it a player or a NPC?" Brother Assist asked.

"It's definitely a player. NPCs don't have killing intent," Gu Fei replied.

Killing intent... Everyone was curiously staring at Gu Fei now.

“I’ll go take a look!” Gu Fei pulled out his sword and carefully headed in the general direction where he felt the killing intent. It was only a fleeting sensation, as the other party might have only looked at him transiently, yet the experienced fighter Gu Fei was still able to feel it. While he could not pinpoint where exactly this person was, he could guarantee that someone was really standing there!

“I’ll accompany you.” Sword Demon pulled out his dagger, entered Stealth, and carefully followed behind Gu Fei. All had their eyes fixed on them as they departed. Oathless Sword and his men finally made their way over moments later, asking upon arrival, “What happened?”

A player pointed to Gu Fei’s figure among the trees. “He said there’s someone behind us.”

“Someone? A player or a NPC?” Youthful Reflection suddenly asked.

All had a strange expression on their faces. Young Master Han sighed. “The heck. Why is everyone asking the same question?”

Youthful Reflection was not amused by this.

Young Master Han laughed. “Sorry, I’m not disparaging you specifically.” As Youthful Reflection was slightly softening to Young Master Han’s comment, the latter continued, “It’s everyone else including you.”

Everyone, including Youthful Reflection, was absolutely furious by this.

“Careful!” Gu Fei’s shout was heard by all the players and they saw him nimbly leap backward as his Moonlit Nightfalls speedily stabbed downward. The crisp sound of metal clashing together rang about, followed by something shining near his foot. They then saw Gu Fei land on his feet and said aloud in all seriousness,

“There’s a trap here.”

Sakurazaka Moony hurried over and began to examine the activated trap by Gu Fei’s foot. The trap’s craftsmanship was far more complex than what they had found before, and it even had a faint metallic shine to it. The sharp jaws that would have dug into the flesh of the trapped target glistened. Everyone could not help but shiver at the sight of this.

Sword Demon canceled his Stealth state beside him; Gu Fei’s warning just then had been for his sake. Even Gu Fei’s heart was palpitating at the moment. “This trap is really abnormal. It could actually spring out and chase after its target.”

Everyone stared at Gu Fei with an expression as though they were looking at a monster. Gu Fei had clearly stepped on that trap mere moments ago, yet he was able to almost instantly jerk his foot out of harm’s way. Since this particular trap could actually spring from the ground and chase after its target for a short distance, Gu Fei had no choice but to stab his sword down in that same instant to stop it. It was evident who the truly anomaly here was!

“That’s too much, Drunk bro. To actually dodge that...” Even Sakurazaka Moony was momentarily distracted from studying the beloved trap before him.

Gu Fei did not react to his praise and merely peered through the depths of the jungle. “I’m afraid that there are more.”

Oathless Sword’s men had come over by now, and Sakurazaka Moony’s question was still the same. “Have you counted the time?”

“Counted the time for what?”

“How long the trap lasts, of course!” Sakurazaka Moony replied matter-of-factly.

“Didn’t it miss Thousand Miles Drunk?”

“Yeah, but it still got triggered! Once the trap is sprung, it will

only disappear when the effect ends, so its duration can still be timed. You guys really have to work on your knowledge about traps!” Sakurazaka Moony was visibly distressed by this.

Who would have thought that there would come a day when the great Traversing Four Seas Guild Leader Oathless Sword would be blamed to the point of speechless? However, this was also when he realized something. We’ve clearly seen this trap get triggered together, so why is this twerp still putting the blame on others? Isn’t he just taking this chance to twist the subject and stir trouble? How detestable.

“This trap’s even more incredible than the last,” Sakurazaka Moony said, “And if that springing motion Drunk bro described is true, then that means that this skill has a higher proficiency, clearly showing us how fearsome the force behind its triggering motion.”

“What about your trap? What is the speed your trap can go?” Oathless Sword suddenly asked.

Sakurazaka Moony flashed him a wry smile. “Mine is nowhere near this speed. I lost a level when I was at level 40.” Before level 40, a new skill could be acquired with every six levels, namely level 12, level 18, and so on. These levels were what players now called ‘skill level’. Whenever players lost their level upon death, the greatest fear they had was to fall below the skill level. That was because the skill itself would disappear once the player dropped below the corresponding threshold. When a player grinded back to that lost level, he or she would need to learn the skill and grind its proficiency from scratch. ‘Losing a skill level’ was therefore far more frightening than just losing a level.

“From the way it looks, we’ve already been surrounded.” After examining the trap, Sakurazaka Moony stood up and said this.

Anyone with half the brain could come to that conclusion.

The direction Gu Fei had gone to was where their expedition had

just passed through. It was clear that this trap had been placed only after they left. Perhaps, what Gu Fei had sensed was the parting glance of the enemy after placing the trap. Undoubtedly, this trap was definitely targeting them.

“Is it a player or NPC?” Youthful Reflection was still struggling with this question.

“It’s a player,” Gu Fei answered him confidently.

“How do you know?” Although someone already told him the answer, he still insisted on having proof, especially since the person claiming this was Gu Fei.

Gu Fei shrugged his shoulders and said, “I saw him.” He figured it was not good to mention killing intent. If he kept going on about it, these players might start treating him in the same way the students in his school treated him whenever he claimed that he knew kung fu.

“You saw him? How are you able to differentiate a player from a NPC with just one glance? There are many NPCs in a city, how do they look any different from any player—hey, wait! Where do you think you’re going? I’m not done—” Gu Fei teleported himself away from Youthful Reflection using Blink once the latter started talking his head off.

“What’s the update?” The three Traversing Four Seas’ core members and the mercenary group leaders were gathered now.

“The men I sent to scout our flanks have also discovered traps. We are now ensnared and surrounded within a web of traps,” Sakurazaka Moony shared the situation to everyone present. The Great Hunting’s men were in charge of searching for traps. Oathless Sword was glad that this group of extremely skeevy outliers he had hired came to be of use in such a scenario.

“Can’t we just remove these traps?” someone asked.

“No!” Oathless Sword moved to stop Sakurazaka Moony before

he began his long-winded speech about the ‘trap containment theory’.

“Why?” The asker was adamant to find out the reason behind this, though, so Sakurazaka Moony once more haughtily explained his theory in great detail.

Oathless Sword tried his best to control himself as he swept his glowering gaze over all those present, wishing to say a few words to emphasize just how serious a predicament they were now in. However, after making a full round, he began to feel that something was off. Carefully looking around the mercenary leaders gathered around him, he confirmed his suspicions as he turned his gaze to Youthful Reflection. “Where’s Silver Moon?”

This meeting was supposed to include every mercenary leader and each core member of Traversing Four Seas. Everyone was present except for Silver Moon.

Youthful Reflection called out Silver Moon on the party channel. He too had only just realized that someone was not present. It could be said that Silver Moon’s plan to conceal his existence was fairly effective; only when such a unique situation cropped up that people realized about his disappearance.

“Where is that guy?!” Oathless Sword wondered aloud as he prepared to send Silver Moon a private message.

“He left,” someone suddenly answered.

Chapter 321 - Progressing via Retreating

The person who just spoke up was the quietest mercenary leader out of everyone present, and also someone whom everyone wanted to converse with more: the leader of Amethyst mercenary group, Luo Luo.

Amethyst Rebirth's guild leader was July, and based on how most mercenary groups born out of established guilds would be, she should be the one leading the guild's mercenary group. However, there were always exceptions. For instance, Youthful Reflection was Four Seas mercenary group's leader despite Traversing Four Seas' guild leader being Oathless Sword. Amethyst Rebirth was similar in how Luo Luo, instead of Guild Leader July, was the leader of its mercenary group.

There were only two ladies that were mercenary leaders present in this meeting: one was Luo Luo and the other was Gu Xiaoshang. However, to these men, Luo Luo held more value than Gu Xiaoshang, as she was the leader of a mercenary group made up entirely of women. If any male player had the intentions of creating an enduring legacy, such as building a harem, forming a good relationship with her would be extremely beneficial. Unfortunately, Luo Luo had been entirely silent in the many meetings that the mercenary leaders had had thus far. She would simply be quietly listening when the other leaders spoke, making it difficult for anyone to establish any sort of relationship with her.

However, Luo Luo's volitional silence was because she was aware of the sole reason behind Amethyst mercenary group's participation in this escort mission: Svelte Dancer. Were it not for the existence of this expert in their midst, Amethyst would definitely be seen as one of the weaker mercenary groups in Yunduan City. Their group was only made unique by the fact that it had an all-female population. If that was the reason behind their invitation to this guild quest, it would just be as despicable as

bringing comfort women for the marching troops.

If Luoluo had a choice in the matter, she would have Svelte Dancer attend these leader meetings instead. It was just a pity that whenever such meetings occurred, Svelte Dancer would coincidentally disappear somewhere to play. She was truly a free spirit.

At this moment, when the question pertaining to Silver Moon's whereabouts was asked, Luo Luo actually spoke her very first words in the leader meeting.

"Oh?" Oathless Sword did not dare to be negligent and hurriedly asked, "Where did he go?"

"I don't know," Luo Luo shook her head. "We saw him run toward the tree to gather some herbs and, when he thought no one was watching, hid behind the tree. I didn't see him come back and rejoin us after."

"What's up with him?" Oathless Sword was puzzled.

"I'm not sure; didn't you guys send him on an errand?" Luo Luo asked him back.

"No!" Oathless Sword denied vehemently before muttering inside in dissatisfaction, Not even saying a word when leaving... He felt very dissatisfied, so he sent Silver Moon a message to ask him about this.

As everyone wondered about this matter, Young Master Han had a warm smile on his face. Luo Luo sent him a message at this moment: "Will this do?"

"Yes," was Young Master Han's reply.

"What next?" Luo Luo asked.

"Next, if no one tries to guess what has happened, then I'll mention it myself." Just as Young Master Han sent her this message, a mercenary leader already leaped out, "Could all of this

have been Silver Moon's plan all along?"

"Silver Moon said he died and was sent back to Baishi City!" Oathless Sword furrowed his brows.

It had been quite some time since Silver Moon died. Currently, he was wasting Dusky Cloud and his men's time by having a quiet sit down in the Knights' Barracks. He had already constructed the perfect script to follow when he faced the comrades he had abandoned as well as Traversing Four Seas whom he had intended to exploit. He was prepared to compose a beautifully crafted speech about how he did not wish to drag down his friends and comrades in his problems and how he chose to sacrifice himself for the greater good. Only by doing this could his lonesome self change his fortune and have a chance to break out from this ordeal.

In order to achieve this, he could not move from where he was. Sacrificing himself for his comrades, he would have to inform them of this matter somehow, but it would seem as though he was fishing for their attention if he informed them himself, so he had to wait for them to discover his disappearance themselves and anxiously ask him about it before he could tell them. He would say a sentence or two in a lighthearted manner to further improve their image of him. This entire time, Silver Moon had been thinking ways to extricate himself from this without damaging his image too much, even as he thought deep down, M*th*rf*ck*rs, how has no one noticed that I'm missing yet?

Someone finally noticed his disappearance, but it was just too bad that the timing was not right.

The more chaotic it was, the more an opportunity could arise. It was truly a pity that Silver Moon had absolutely no clue what was happening on the other end. Meanwhile, Young Master Han, who had full knowledge of everything happening on both sides, started his devious and dirty plan to smear Silver Moon's good name.

Silver Moon had thought of a perfect explanation for his act of

disappearing.

However, Young Master Han had also come up with a perfectly logical explanation for his disappearance, making sure to take everything that had happened thus far into consideration. What made it worse was that Young Master Han had not spoken even a word yet and had only been utilizing what had happened to sow the necessary seeds of doubt. Therefore, it was only naturally for someone to fall, hook line and sinker, for his ploy and to blurt out the very thing he wanted to say: Silver Moon's disappearance had something to do with the current situation that they had found themselves in.

Silver Moon's plan was to make progress by retreating, but his retreat unfortunately lacked people following in tandem. After apologizing to Oathless Sword for dying, the latter did not bother to reply to him any further. Silver Moon almost died from the suspense, as he wondered why Oathless Sword did not follow up his question and ask how he had died....

He was unaware that his death hardly concerned Oathless Sword. In fact, Oathless Sword was merely wondering how Silver Moon's departure connected to his current predicament.

The leaders present had also begun to argue with one another on this. One side believed Silver Moon had a hand in the matter, while the other side believed that the two were unrelated, with the simple reason being the fact that Silver Moon's comrades in his mercenary group were still present!

"Hmph. This wouldn't be the first time he abandoned his comrades to flee," someone said icily.

Sakurazaka Moony!

Young Master Han was really very pleased that he did not have to say a word at all.

"How do you know?" someone asked Sakurazaka Moony. Those

present did not have any deep friendship with Silver Moon, but whenever anyone asked him about his past, he would simply excuse himself and dismiss the issue as quickly as possible just like what he had done back in Yunduan City's prison with Gu Fei, causing everyone to feel sympathetic to his plight.

"How do I know?" Sakurazaka Moony gave a mirthless smile. "Did you guys not inquire about this matter while in Yueye City? Why would anyone there not know what happened?"

Everyone was stunned. None of them had any particularly strong relationship with Silver Moon, so no one really took note to specifically inquire about his past!

Thus, Sakurazaka Moony began narrating the whole sordid affair, with some embellishments of his own. And given how sleazy he was, he laid it on so thick that Silver Moon sounded as though he were the greatest evil known to man, especially that disgusting bit about him deserting his 'wife' and leaving her to pick up the pieces when Past Deeds Guild fell into shambles. Gu Xiaoshang was the first one to pounce on this, and since Silver Moon was nowhere to be found for her to vent her frustration on, she directed her attack to Oathless Sword, instead, "F*ck! To think you'd even hire such kind of trash! Did everyone else in Yunduan City die such that you had no choice but to bring him along?!"

"I didn't know anything about this before I hired him!" Oathless Sword smiled bitterly.

Poor Silver Moon was still sitting all alone in the Knights' Barracks of Baishi City, waiting for Oathless Sword to show his concern over his death.

Young Master Han felt that it was time for him to speak up. "There's no way of telling whether this matter is related to Silver Moon or not. Perhaps, he found a trap but was blocked off by the enemies and killed off just as he was about to flee."

This was the true progress-through-retreating method!

Young Master Han simply had no means to properly pin this ambush on to Silver Moon as it was something outside of his control, so he decided to take a step back and point out the unlikelihood of Silver Moon being the orchestrator of the ambush while pointing out that the latter might have fled for fear of his death. Although this transgression might not be as extreme as Silver Moon betraying them, it was still enough to damage his character irreparably.

The goal Young Master Han that had set was thus achieved.

Although he did not successfully make Silver Moon take the blame of landing them into this web of traps, he still managed to help Silver Moon gain a few more enemies. This was entirely unnecessary, though, as Dusky Cloud and company were more than enough to take care of him. Using this pretext to direct the flow of conversation, what Young Master Han had truly done here was timely expose Silver Moon's true colors to everyone. When everyone calmed down and thought back to this matter, they would all realize that, at the end of the day, there was only one takeaway on this subject about Silver Moon: the man was scum and nothing else.

This was everything Young Master Han required, since it would essentially snuff out Silver Moon's hope of making a comeback.

Oathless Sword sent his reply to Silver Moon: "Dead?"

After waiting for such a long time, Silver Moon was elated at getting a response, but he continued his charade: "It's nothing."

"Oh. You're pretty far off, right?"

"Yes. The Knights' Barracks!" Silver Moon replied nonchalantly, even as the voice in his heart screamed, Quickly ask me the question! Ask me why I'm still in the Knights' Barracks after having died for so long!

In the end, Oathless Sword's reply was even more unemotional:

“Well, it’s getting late. You can wash up and sleep!”

Silver Moon was stupefied. It was so unfortunate that he did not take the initiative to reach out when he had the chance; the inherent passivity of the progress-through-retreating method was a clear drawback in this situation. Furthermore, Silver Moon was unaware that Oathless Sword had instantly deleted him from his friends’ list once he had ended this exchange. No matter what other plans he came up to try to salvage this situation, there was no way a stranger could get in contact with the top guild leader of Yunduan City....

“Ahem.” After Oathless Sword finished dealing with that matter, he realized that everyone was still deriding Silver Moon’s lack of character. He felt his exchange with Silver Moon moments ago was really beautiful, so he could not help but let his feelings overcome him as he joined the others in ridiculing the man of the hour.

“Hey!” Youthful Reflection could no longer stand it in the end. “Can we stop talking about that trash of a human? Just how are we going to resolve our current conundrum?”

“Uhhh...” Everyone came back to their senses and considered the matter at hand.

“We will only be wasting our time and energy if we drag this on any further. We should try our best to get out of the jungle A.S.A.P.!” Youthful Reflection said.

We don’t really need you to tell us that... everyone wryly thought to themselves. Who else here was not aware of this fact?

“So—” Just as Youthful Reflection was about to tell everyone of his plan, a sudden scream was heard coming from the main body of the expedition over by the other side.

“Who the f*ck stepped on a trap again?” Oathless Sword got up and turned to gaze in that direction.

“Thieves! Thieves are within our ranks!” the players over there

yelped.

“Have they begun their attack?” All the leaders were jolted into action as they stood up.

They were not afraid of a direct confrontation. What they were worried of was the enemies slowly grinding them out after setting up the traps. As such, this development where the enemies had taken the initiative to attack was actually great for the players from Yunduan City!

Chapter 322 - Dancing Flames from the Unknown

Each of the mercenary leaders that were sitting on the ground during the meeting quickly got up and spiritedly headed back to join the main body of the expedition. These leaders drew their respective weapons out as they made their way back, shouting out their battlecry and calling for their members to gather around and band together to resist the enemies' attack.

When they returned and took a look, all they saw was their men in upheaval, yet the enemies were nowhere to be found.

"Where are the enemies?" all the mercenary leaders competed to ask their underlings this.

"They suddenly appeared and fled after killing two of our men!" someone briefed.

"Why didn't you give chase?" all the leaders inquired.

"We did!" All of them pointed toward a certain direction where three players could be seen standing rigidly among the trees and bushes. Obviously, none of them was posing there intentionally; they were temporarily immobile after falling victim to the enemies' traps. The three players were ensnared by the Hunters' traps that dealt them no damage, yet they were nearly in hysterics, as flames were currently burning beneath their feet.

"Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno!" All these skilled mercenary leaders could tell from a glance what it was.

"Just what exactly happened?" one of the leaders asked.

"Four Thieves suddenly appeared, killed two of our players lingering on the periphery, and immediately ran away. The players from our side who gave chase got themselves caught in the traps. It was then that we saw the flames from enemy Mages igniting; out of all the players that chased after the enemies, only those three

over there are left.”

The mercenary leaders finally made sense of the situation. The three remaining players had survived thus far due to them being Warriors – a job class known for its abundant HP. The other five that had died most likely had job classes with low HP.

Currently, from a distance, Priests were incessantly bestowing Heal on the three Warriors, who were anxiously looking around them. What these three men feared was the flames picking up anew. In the end, their enemies neither struck again nor revealed themselves. The three Warriors hurriedly returned to the safety of their respective groups once the traps ensnaring them expired.

The jungle recovered its serenity once more.

The enemies had mounted an attack on them so fast and managed to remove a total of seven players from Yunduan City. Out of the seven, four were members of Traversing Four Seas. These four respawned in the faraway Yunduan City and subsequently failed the guild quest; As for the other three mercenaries, they were sent back to Baishi City and would have to travel for three hours once more to rejoin the expedition.

“Everyone, take care of your immediate surroundings!” Oathless Sword ordered aloud. All waved their weapons around them to see if there were any hidden Thieves near them; some Mages even went as far as to carpet-bomb the area around them. Everyone only heaved a sigh of relief when no enemy Thieves were found hanging around. However, being gone now did not mean that the enemies would be gone forever. No matter how helpless they were to the Thieves in Stealth, they could not possibly get the Mages to continuously bombard the surrounding area.

Oathless Sword’s teeth were nearly grinded flat as he addressed Youthful Reflection, “Get Thousand Miles Drunk over here!”

He was the only person they knew that could counter Stealth.

Gu Fei once more came to their call. Oathless Sword immediately approached him with an expression that told how highly regarded Gu Fei was to them. “Brother Miles, we are in your care once more.”

Gu Fei naturally knew just what they were hoping for him to do. It was just that the method he used was very limited in this circumstance. Sighing, he told Oathless Sword, “Guild Leader Oathless, I can at most keep a lookout toward one direction; I can’t defend you from all sides.”

“Why is that?” Oathless Sword asked.

“Drunk bro here knows kung fu; he depends entirely on killing intent to detect hidden enemies!” Fireball, who happened to be among the players gathered in the area, happily interjected.

“Where did this guy come from? Drag him away!” Oathless Sword bellowed. Two Warriors promptly came by to toss Fireball away.

Gu Fei knew no one would believe him when he saw how Fireball was treated, so he wracked his brains for a way to explain it that these gamers would understand. “Uhm... What I have is a passive skill that requires the enemies to notice me before I can react accordingly. Take now for example; if those Thieves in Stealth coming from the outside can’t see me while I’m standing in the middle of the crowd like this, I won’t know where they are. Do you guys get what I’m saying?”

“Oh...” everyone hummed.

Hmph. To think you’d publicly reveal your secret so easily! the scheming Youthful Reflection thought to himself. He was already trying to determine how he could take down Gu Fei without him knowing about it. It’s quite the challenging proposition! Youthful Reflection continued to ruminate.

“In that case, Brother Miles just has to take a high ground, such

that even people outside of the circle can see you, right?" Oathless Sword suddenly suggested. Living up to his name as the leader of the number one guild in Yunduan City, he demonstrated his rather high level of intelligence despite the ordeal that they were in.

Gu Fei laughed bitterly as he shook his head, "Guild Leader Oathless, do you want me to become the core of these thousand men and have everyone gather around me? I'm sorry but the range of my passive skill isn't that large. At most, it can reach maybe ten meters. Squeezing everyone within that area is just entirely impossible!"

"In that case, you can't even take care of one side at all!" Oathless Sword face darkened.

"Technically speaking, you're not wrong," Gu Fei admitted regretfully. He was naturally clear of their situation right now, so he sincerely wished to do his part, but there was truly nothing much he could do.

Everyone could not do anything to help, either. This was when they heard someone from the side curse, "F*ck me! They're back again!"

All of them turned their gazes over, just in time to see two white lights flashed in the direction of that voice. Four enemy Thieves in Stealth were back again. Quickly one-shutting two players, they immediately turned to flee. Having experienced this before, no one dared to physically chase after them and the Mages and Archers merely flung spells and shot arrows from afar at these four interlopers.

However, the four Thieves seemed to be very adept with what this sort of attacking style; after executing their attacks, each of them activated Fleetfoot the instant they dispersed in four different directions. They then dove into the trees after several steps and were quickly nowhere to be found. The Mages and Archers, who were planning to counterattack, only managed to

position themselves to cast spells and nock arrows!

“F*CK!” Just as everyone was feeling disgruntled by this, numerous flame wheels appeared in the sky, all glowing brightly as their heat intensified....

“AHHHHH!” everyone screamed in fear as they dispersed as far as they could to escape this spell’s AOE.

The over a thousand-strong army descended into chaos as the players ran helter-skelter. Anyone that fell was bound to be trampled by another, and the entire jungle was soon filled with cries of terror. Oathless Sword kept yelling for everyone to keep calm. This was when a panicking Warrior, who had been trying to evade the spells, accidentally dipped into the small circle Oathless Sword was occupying that was not covered by the mass of AOE spells and crashed into his back, nearly causing Oathless Sword to bite off his tongue. He turned around to glare daggers at the culprit, yet no one cared for his murderous stare as they were all watching this horrifying situation unfold.

The flame wheels came crashing down and a sea of flames surged all around them. Some immediately died from this magic assault, while many were heavily injured by their comrades’ stampede.

It was inevitable, though. Plenty of Warriors had used Charge to get themselves out of the radius of the flame wheels that had been conjured out of nowhere. Nowadays, the Charge skill was no longer just being used by Warriors to attack opponents, and a majority of them had taken to using it to augment their movement speed for dodging or evading incoming attacks. There was simply no way to ensure that their Charge would not connect with an innocent person in this chaos.

Some were directly knocked right into the flaming sea, while others flew deep into the jungle – never to be seen in this place again. There were even some who were inflicted with the Dizzy status effect, collapsing to the ground without any response.

Quite a few even discovered a sudden pain traveling up their legs as they ran aimlessly, preventing them from moving any further, and felt utterly flabbergasted once they learned the source of this: they had been ensnared by the enemy Hunters' traps. "Why are there even traps here?" None of them forgot that they were currently inside the enemies' web of traps, yet some of them still fell victim to these traps.

Young Master's Elite had always been hanging at the tail end of the expedition and were positioned in the outer circle when the army converged. It just so happened that the bulk of the magic assault was concentrated in their position, so they were duly bombarded with many spells. While it was not difficult for these veterans to avoid the spell bombardment, their flustered comrades nearby was a different matter altogether. In fact, their comrades' stampeding was far more frightening than the enemies' wave of magic attacks. Young Master Han was unfortunately knocked down to the ground by a comrade Warrior as he was making his escape.

Thankfully, the Dizzy status effect did not proc, so he sat on the ground and managed to keep himself alive in this initial fiery bombardment by relying on his superb Priest skills. Sword Demon and Royal God Call swiftly stepped in and dragged him out of the persistent flames of the Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno. Had they not done so, Young Master Han would have been trampled to death by their allies instead of being burned to death by their enemies.

The flames of the Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno lasted for another five seconds before extinguishing. The Mages' fire spells would usually be unable to cause actual fire inside this type of terrain because they burned quickly and dampened even more swiftly. Were it not for the spell's duration lasting for five seconds, the burning traces of Descending Wheel of Flames alone would be largely insignificant.

Nonetheless, the five seconds of burning managed to set the dry leaves and branches ablaze. These ignited detritus were easily put out, so no harm was done by them. All the players from Yunduan City were covered in soot and visibly drained from the ordeal, with some continuing to run aimlessly in their panic. Oathless Sword took care not to bump into anyone again as he shouted, “Everyone, stay calm! Mercenary leaders, take charge of your men!”

There were no more than a hundred men in each mercenary group, so how difficult could it get to take charge of them when compared to the seven hundred fifty men of Traversing Four Seas? In actuality, those that were in utter state of disarray right now were the members of Traversing Four Seas. As the mercenary groups organized themselves, all the leaders did not forget to throw disdainful glares at Oathless Sword.

Gu Fei had long since located his fellow mercenaries. “Are you guys alright?”

Everyone looked toward Young Master Han, as he was the only one among them who had been in any danger.

Young Master Han forlornly looked at the spot he had fallen moments ago. “Such a pity. I’ve just taken out that bottle from my pocket, too.”

“How did this happen?” Gu Fei was looking all around him.

“Mages snuck up near us! To think we did not spot even one of them... These guys we are up against are very accustomed with PvPing in this type of terrain, and they’re extremely familiar with this jungle here,” Young Master Han explained, declaring, “We are in big trouble!”

Chapter 323 - The Number One Trap Expert

In their moment of peril, a majority of the players seemed to have forgotten that their reason for being in this location was because of a mission, and all they thought of was how to escape their current predicament. Young Master Han's prediction about the unreliability of this army gathered at the last minute had now come true. Deserters, mostly Thieves, could be seen from the various mercenary groups. As long as these deserters moved carefully toward the jungle exit and avoided any set traps after activating Stealth and such, they should have no problem escaping....

And yet, the screams of these fleeing Thieves were soon heard coming from various directions. With their Stealth interrupted, they found it hard to maneuver about and were quickly ensnared by the enemies' traps. The hidden enemy Mages took this chance to unleash Fire Affinity spells that killed off each of the deserters.

Not only did these players die, they also experienced great embarrassment upon their death. When they stepped on the traps, their intention to flee was made known to everyone watching. While the loss of a level upon death was temporary, the damage dealt on their reputation by their act of fleeing could be considered as permanent. Plenty of them were even informed by the system that they were kicked out from their respective mercenary groups as they respawned in Baishi City.

The leaders of the mercenary groups where those deserters had come from were utterly embarrassed by this, thinking that everyone must be looking at them with contempt right now. In actuality, they were all busy preserving their lives and no one really cared about anyone else's actions. Under Youthful Reflection's instructions, all the mercenaries as well as the Traversing Four Seas' players hurriedly formed a huge circle facing outward; Warriors and Priests formed the outer circle.

Surviving the enemy Mages' assault was not difficult as long as these two job classes with the highest HP were assigned to tank their attacks.

Doing a quick headcount of the remaining players, Oathless Sword's expression turned ghastly. Just that short moment of carnage that they had experienced actually lost them two hundred seventeen men, a hundred of which were players from Traversing Four Seas. This was perhaps the heaviest attack that they had come under ever since the start of their expedition. The remaining members of Traversing Four Seas now barely reached six hundred.

Once more, the jungle regained its stillness, as all the players monitored their respective front with bated breaths. Now that they had assumed a defensive formation, there was no way the enemies could find another opportunity to silently pick off their comrades.

The players from Yunduan City were not satisfied with just achieving this stalemate, though. What they currently wanted was to break out and properly escape from their predicament. However, without knowing their enemies' hiding places, they could only stand their ground here.

“Who are you people?! Come out and show yourselves if you dare!” Oathless Sword was obviously driven to the wall by this point.

“He he he...” A soft chuckle came from within the trees in response to Oathless Sword’s declaration. All of them turned their heads in that direction even as Youthful Reflection quickly bellowed, “Don’t be negligent! Continue keeping an eye on your assigned direction.”

All swiftly retracted their heads; some even sprained their necks with how quick they had shifted their heads back. With the pressure mounting, even their muscles were tensed.

“Who are you?! Come out and speak face to face!” Oathless Sword

yelled. Being a Warrior, he was among those standing in the outermost circle. Meanwhile, the corrupt ex-official Todd was at the very heart of their formation.

One player emerged from the jungle, stopping a short distance from everyone. The jungle was dim, so it was difficult to make out his face, yet his lips seemed to be curled up into a smile. This man raised his arms up, waved, and shouted, “Greetings, everyone! Linyin City welcomes you all.”

Everyone was speechless. Some of the players that were facing a different direction from the voice really wished to turn around to take a look at the man, but they were afraid that this was just a ruse to draw their attention away. No one dared to move. Vigilantly watching their front, they tried to hear the man speak from behind them – it was truly depressing.

“Who are you?!” Oathless Sword was in charge of this expedition, so it made sense for him to be the one to speak with the man. The person faced Oathless Sword and the two stared at each other from afar.

The man did not answer his question; instead, he posed a question to Oathless Sword, “How do you like the taste of my traps?”

Although the Mages’ and Thieves’ attacks dealt most damage to the players from Yunduan City, it was undeniable that the traps had controlled the entire situation. The existence of this web of traps caused everyone to move about gingerly, like fish trapped in a barrel.

“Hmph. It’s nothing much.” Oathless Sword only had utter resentment toward the traps, so in the moment before he could answer, the trap expert Sakurazaka Moony actually budged in and spoke in his place. However, his statement only made the people behind him feel sheepish as they glanced at one another. It was nothing much... yet they were completely entrapped by those. Was

his statement not just a blatant lie?

Indeed, the man laughed at his words before asking, “And who might you be?”

Sakurazaka Moony was standing beside Oathless Sword when he leaped up to steal the latter’s thunder. Patting his chest, he answered, “The name’s Sakurazaka Moony, and I’m the number one trap expert in Yunduan City. Challenge me if you’ve got the moxie!”

Unfortunately, Sakurazaka Moony’s name sounded adorably whimsical and was far from being imposing. Although his words sounded arrogant, the manner in which he delivered his rebuttal made it sound as though he was simply boasting in front of a true expert. Even his bunch of skeevy friends from his mercenary group immediately ridiculed him, “Ha ha ha ha! Moony’s making a fool of himself again!”

The man joined in as well. “What’s so great about being number one in Yunduan City? I’m sorry, but yours truly is the number one trap expert across Parallel World!”

“And just who might you be?” Sakurazaka Moony demanded.

“Deep Waters.”

The crowd buzzed. This name was far from ordinary for it happened to be the IGN of one of the Five Unyielding Experts that were largely regarded as indomitable existences in Parallel World. Although plenty of players leveled up after the conclusion of Parallel World’s PvP event and level 41 was no longer exclusive to the Five Unyielding Experts, their position in the game’s experience leaderboards remained unshakably unchanged; the five of them were still the first five names ranked on the list.

Being among the top five of the overall leaderboard, he was naturally ranked first on the Archer experience leaderboard. If he advanced to a Hunter, his claim of being the number one trap

expert in Parallel World would not be an exaggeration.

Sakurazaka Moony was clearly in an awkward spot, flippantly quipping, “Having a high level doesn’t mean your skills are good!” Although he said these words in a normal volume, his bunch of bad friends mercilessly mocked him still. “It’s over for you, Moony. Haven’t you heard of the saying, ‘There is always a taller mountain out there’? Next time, keep a low profile.”

“YOU F*CK*RS, SHUT THE HELL UP!” Sakurazaka Moony finally exploded, issuing a challenge to Deep Waters as a corollary. “Deep Waters, is it? Come and duel with me; let’s see who’s the real number one trap expert in Parallel World!”

“He he. I’ll acknowledge your claim of being the real top trap expert if you can make your way to me safely.” Deep Waters chuckled.

Deep Waters was about thirty meters away from Yunduan City’s players. This distance between the two sides was sure to be filled with traps, which was why he dared reveal himself thusly. Oathless Sword knew this as well; otherwise, he would have ordered several Thieves to assassinate Deep Waters already. However, Sakurazaka Moony’s skill with traps was not something to scoff at. Now that Deep Waters had thrown down the gauntlet, perhaps....

“That’s quite the brag!” Sakurazaka Moony said what Oathless Sword was thinking. “Guess I’ll have to take a shot.”

“Please do!” Deep Waters gestured invitingly.

“Alright, just you watch!” Sakurazaka Moony looked around him before finally breaking off a tree branch that was about two meters long. Holding it with both hands, Sakurazaka Moony declared, “I’m coming over now!”

Deep Waters only did the please-do gesture as he did before.

“YAAHHH!” Sakurazaka Moony roared as he lay on the ground

with that branch in hand. Wiggling his butt in the air, he began to carefully prod his way to where Deep Waters was standing as he tried to uncover the traps along the way. Everyone collapsed. This was just too crude. Just from the air the two men were exuding, it was clear who deserved the title of being number one.

Sakurazaka Moony's skill with traps was the real deal. In no time, he picked out three traps that were hidden beneath the jungle detritus and buried in the ground. Sakurazaka Moony felt quite pleased with himself; if this was all there was to the traps Deep Waters had set up, Sakurazaka Moony would have no difficulty reaching him.

With this thought in mind, Sakurazaka Moony deftly dug out the fifth trap. He tossed all five traps in a pile and prepared to properly embarrass Deep Waters when this was over.

Looking up, Sakurazaka Moony saw that he had only traveled for five meters. The first two meters did not have any traps, while all the five traps he had found thus far were buried in the following three meters. Considering that Sakurazaka Moony was traveling in a straight line, he reckoned that other traps must be buried on either side of him. These traps were not buried too close to one another, yet the sheer number would make one wonder just how many Hunters did Deep Waters bring over to set them up.

As Sakurazaka Moony poked and prodded his way forward, the Yunduan City's players from behind him suddenly gasped, "Be careful!"

Sakurazaka Moony was puzzled by their warning. Turning his head over his shoulder, he spotted two Thieves slowly fade into view from behind him.

"F*ck! How despicable!" Sakurazaka Moony cursed.

"A ha ha ha ha! If you only consider the Hunting Trap as the only trap I have in place and not the Thieves ready and waiting, then how can you call yourself as the number one trap expert? Your

knowledge of what constitutes a trap is really too simplistic! Let me teach you this lesson today, so you can properly contemplate over this when you return to your city!” Deep Waters laughed.

“That’s really low!” Since the players from Yunduan City did not expect Deep Waters to do such a thing, none of them was able to provide Sakurazaka Moony any timely assistance. And unless someone among them had the ability to move to his side instantly, no one could save him from impending death.

Fortunately, there was indeed such a person in Yunduan City, as the Translocation: Blink skill allowed its user instantaneous movement.

It just so happened that Sakurazaka Moony’s distance was also within the five-meter radius that this person could teleport himself using the skill.

Just as the two Thieves thought that they had this in the bag, a black figure suddenly materialized right behind them.

Now, it was Deep Waters’ turn to yell, “Be careful!” Following the flash of a huge V-shaped flaming trail, the two Thieves lost their lives together.

“Drunk bro...” Sakurazaka Moony was so moved that tears almost leaked out his lachrymal glands. This was what true brotherhood was. Looking at his so-called comrades, who were laughing hysterically as they relished the sight of him failing while casually pulling their bows with nocked arrows at their best capacity, Sakurazaka Moony could not help but feel anguish.

“Run back to safety now!” Gu Fei patted Sakurazaka Moony’s shoulder.

Sakurazaka Moony felt danger creep up to them as the ground beneath their feet began to heat up and the sky above their heads started glowing brightly – a clear indication that enemy Mages were at work. Sakurazaka Moony scampered to his feet and, after

tossing the tree branch away, ran back toward their side. Before the branch fell to the ground, Gu Fei grabbed it from the air with a stretch of his hand.

Chapter 324

Capturing Deep Waters Alive

Gu Fei tested the branch and felt quite satisfied with its sturdiness. Returning Moonlit Nightfalls inside his dimensional pocket, he plunged the branch into the ground with both hands as he vaulted himself into the air. Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno raged all over the ground, but Gu Fei, who was sailing through the air, was unscathed by it. His head brushed past Descending Wheel of Flames, yet he did not sustain heavy damage from it. While the mana Gu Fei possessed as a Mage was truly laughable, his HP was far more outstanding than any other Mages thanks to the amazing Windchaser's Blessing that he had equipped!

Everyone watching the spectacle exclaimed, "Whoa! That works, too?"

Gu Fei was not done yet. Pulling out a coil of rope mid-air, he lassoed it forty-five degrees up the tree branches and found purchase in the foliage above. The branch that had supported his weight thus far fell as Gu Fei decisively abandoned it in favor of swinging forward from the rope. He then nimbly climbed up the rope for a bit. Gu Fei was aware that if he did position himself higher on the rope, he would most likely find himself crashing into the ground once the rope swung back to its lowest point.

All of this was accomplished quickly and smoothly, and the crowd cried out once more, "He even brought a rope?! Is this guy an acrobat or something?!"

Gu Fei was disgruntled when he heard this. Acrobatics? This was kung fu!

Chinese legend spoke of the Eighteen Arms, when in fact that number was entirely arbitrary. With the changing of times and advancement of many dynasties, various versions of these eighteen rose. Nonetheless, when one looked at these eighteen based on

their overarching classifications, they were essentially consisted of projectile weapons, long weapons, short weapons, flexible weapons, and no weapons.

Dividing these major classes into subcategories, every iteration or version could be part of the fabled Eighteen Arms. As such, it was impossible to claim mastery over all these eighteen. Besides, Gu Fei had never heard of any martial art practitioner researching and honing strange weapons, such as Wolf Teeth Mace, Twin Hammer, and Meteor Hammer. In Gu Fei's case, he had not even learned anything about ranged weapons in any form.

The rest needed not be mentioned for now. Still, this particular acrobatic skill with the rope that Gu Fei had demonstrated was truly kung fu. It belonged to the classification of flexible weapons, particularly under the rope subcategory. While an acrobat would surely be able to swing like him and with more finesse, Gu Fei was confident an acrobat could not tie the rope's end to a tree with just a toss like him. This inherent skill that Gu Fei had just displayed was once more lost to the laymen witnessing it, causing Gu Fei to feel a bout of sadness.

Still, whether it was kung fu or acrobatic, everyone present was rooted to the spot as they witnessed Gu Fei's amazing performance. It was not just his comrades, too. Even Deep Waters, who was twenty-five meters away from Gu Fei, was thoroughly mesmerized by the entire sequence, only snapping back to reality the moment Gu Fei propelled himself and appeared right before him.

The most important criterion to be a top class Archer was to never let any other player get close to him or her. Despite Deep Waters advancing his job class to a Hunter, this criterion remained. He had no wish to become entangled in melee combat at all, so he turned to seek cover from the tree beside him. As long as he could disengage from this opponent, Deep Waters was confident that he could escape anyone tracking him. It was as the old adage

went: ‘Born of this jungle, he is familiar with every aspect of it.’

Unfortunately for him, Gu Fei was not about to let him do this. Raising his finger in the air, Gu Fei quickly chanted, “Electric Wall! Fall!”

Electric Wall instantly formed right before Deep Waters; he would have run directly into its crackling embrace had he reacted a moment slower. By the time he stopped himself and moved to circle around it, Gu Fei had already dashed beside him and mercilessly delivered a slash. Gu Fei followed this up with a leg sweep, which matched the pace of Deep Waters’ footsteps, in an effort to trip the latter.

Unexpectedly, Deep Waters leaped forward in the instant that Gu Fei executed the leg sweep, causing the latter to hit nothing but air. Gu Fei could not control how many people got killed or injured whenever he used kung fu, but it was extremely rare for him to entirely miss his intended target like this. Therefore, he received quite the shock that Deep Waters had actually managed dodge the move that he had considered to be flawless.

Gu Fei did not dare to slow down to think about this now and just hurriedly gave chase to Deep Waters. The movement speed the latter possessed might be better than his, but as long as the distance between them was no more than five meters, Gu Fei was certain he would not miss the second time around, especially once Blink’s cooldown ended.

This plan was just formulated in his mind when he felt the slightest vibration under his feet. Gu Fei’s heart cried out and he quickly took a step backward.

A trap was actually buried in this spot... Gu Fei came to the realization on how Deep Waters had managed to dodge his leg sweep just then. The man did not actually react to his kick but was consciously leaping over to avoid the set trap in this spot, coincidentally allowing him to dodge Gu Fei’s leg sweep.

Gu Fei dodged the moment he triggered the trap, his reaction speed already reaching the peak of what was humanly possible. Gu Fei reckoned that if this trap were in reality, his neat dodging might even cause it to not trigger; after all, a certain amount of strength must be exerted to trigger the trap. Sadly, this game was not bounded by such principles of physics when it came to trap activation. No matter how much pressure or strength was exerted, the trap would get triggered once touched. This trap which Sakurazaka Moony had classified as of higher caliber came to life way fiercer than the normal traps, leaping right out to ensnare its target once triggered.

Fortunately, Gu Fei was already mentally prepared for this after his last encounter with such traps. His sword was already out as he took that hop back, executing this move faster than the last time.

The self-proclaimed number one expert trapper in Parallel World Deep Waters was still fleeing up ahead. Deep Water's skill with traps was naturally amazing, so when he heard the boing sound of the trap springing behind him, he immediately knew that it had been triggered.

Who else could be chasing him right now but Gu Fei? Deep Waters did not expect that this man would actually get caught so soon. To think Deep Waters was worrying about his previous leap being too obvious to the point of telegraphing his intention to Gu Fei. Despite the man's nimbleness, his brain was apparently not as quick!

With such a thought in mind, Deep Waters ecstatically turned his head over to look, only to see a very familiar object noisily flying straight toward him. Before Deep Waters could scream, a snapping sound ended the boing sound.

“Wa ha ha ha!” Sakurazaka Moony looked over to watch Gu Fei’s chase as he ran outside the AOE of the cast Descending Wheel of Flames and Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno. He was currently closer to the action, so he could see the two’s movement clearly.

Sakurazaka Moony seemed as though he would roll on the floor laughing any moment now. Amid his fits of uncontrollable laughter, he pointed his hand to Deep Waters and mocked, “You’re definitely worthy of the title as the number one trap expert! To actually get a d*mn trap clamped on your nose like that... I admit I am no match for that!”

Deep Waters was already in tears, and they were actual tears of anguish that he could not hold back, either.

What made Deep Waters feel more pain, though, was the fact that he could not move at all! The trap was not clamping on his leg but his nose, yet the effect it had still left him immobile. Even he, the number one trap expert, did not know that such a situation could occur, as no one had really thought of trying to do this before!

This must be a BUG! Deep Waters thought in his despair.

Gu Fei was actually rather surprised that such a situation had occurred as well. He did flick the trap stuck to his sword toward Deep Waters’ head, but he did not expect the man to turn around and get his nose caught in the trap like that, much less imagine that it would actually have the same effect as clamping on a foot.

The trap would only fall off after the skill effect ended – this was the system’s inviolable rule. Thus, Deep Waters could only freeze on this position with the trap biting on his nose, looking absolutely comical that any self-respecting experts with a shred of decency would rather commit suicide to spare themselves of the embarrassment. As such, when Gu Fei came up to him with that sinisterly glinting sword, Deep Waters was hoping he would quickly finish him off and end this embarrassment.

Gu Fei did not lash out with his sword when he got near, though; instead, his free hand rummaged inside his dimensional pocket.

Could this man have an even crueler tool?! Deep Water was about to protest when he saw Gu Fei pull out an apple and munch on it as

he stood there, asking, “How are you feeling?”

Using Blink at its maximum range, Twin Incineration, and Electric Wall at its maximum cost... That was the very limit of Gu Fei’s mana, and he currently did not have even a drip left in him to cast more spells.

“Hmph!” Deep Waters wanted to harrumph in defiance, yet no sound came out as his nose was currently clamped. In the end, he could only open his mouth to speak, “It’s best if you kill me while you still can, even if doing so is useless. After all, there’s no way any of you can get out of this jungle even if I die. I’ll be back soon. Ptooey, ptooey, ptooey!”

Deep Waters’ ptooey was not actually directed at Gu Fei. Since the trap was buried in the ground, plenty of mud and dirt were caught on it. Now that the trap was dangling right above his mouth, these mud and dirt particles got inside his mouth every time he opened it, making it extremely difficult for him to talk.

“He he!” Gu Fei chuckled as he tossed the half-eaten apple away. He put his hand inside his dimensional pocket again and pulled out another coil of rope, saying, “What’s the point of killing you?”

In the next moment, his right arm whirled about – the tip of his sword once more scorched out a V-shaped trail and, following this sequence of actions, two Thieves appeared in thin air and quickly morphed into white lights.

“No need to call your comrades over; Stealth doesn’t work on me,” Gu Fei said.

Deep Waters was perplexed. He knew his ally Thieves were closing in on Gu Fei with Stealth, yet even he did not know when they would strike. He did totally not expect Gu Fei to be cognizant of this better than him and have the ability to dispose the two players with a wave of his arm.

Gu Fei could still perceive some Thieves eyeing him, yet since

they were not attempting to get close to him, he merely turned his attention over to Deep Waters as he proceeded to stoop over and tie the rope in hand around Deep Waters' legs.

"F*CK!" Deep Waters got what Gu Fei was trying to do. While his lower half could not put up a struggle, his upper half was still free to do so. Bending his waist, he moved to stop Gu Fei. However, Gu Fei immediately distanced himself from him once he finished tying Deep Waters up.

Tying Sacred Flames of Baptism on the rope's other end, Gu Fei tossed it over to the crowd and shouted, "Catch!"

"Got it!" War Without Wounds answered from within the crowd as he deftly caught the weapon.

"Drag him back!" Gu Fei ordered.

"Roger that!" War Without Wounds flexed.

"F*ck your ancestors!" Deep Waters bellowed as the rope around his ankles became taut with that tug of War Without Wounds. With the force exerted on his legs, Deep Waters came crashing to the ground.

Chapter 325 - Without a Care

War Without Wounds' Strength was substantial. Despite him having slow movement speed, the items he threw would fly really fast. As such, Deep Waters, who was displaced off his feet, was dragged across the ground for a good distance by War Without Wounds' one tug. The expert Deep Waters no longer cared for his image as he hollered, "SAVE ME!"

Many of Deep Waters' comrades – consisted of Mages, Thieves, and Archers – were hiding in the surrounding trees. Seeing the miserable state that he was in, how could they not attempt to rescue him? The Thieves ran over with Fleetfoot to try and hold him down, the Archers tried their best to sever the rope with their arrows, and the Mages tried to burn it off with their spells. Some of the not-so-bright Mages actually cast Arctic Whirlwind to slow down Deep Waters in their haste to rescue him, not realizing that they were only hindering the movement of the already immobile Deep Waters. If they truly intended to stop him from being dragged away, they should cast that spell on the person doing the pulling, War Without Wounds.

In short, all his comrades did everything to prevent him from being dragged off, but none of which worked.

If these people had given this matter any thought, they would immediately realize how futile their efforts were. On the Archers' part, they would require a godly level of mastery in archery to sever the rope with their arrows, and for that to happen, they would not only have to be actual sharpshooters in reality, they would also require the aid of Parallel World's system to make such a miraculous shot.

On the Mages' part... Given that their Fireball and Descending Wheel of Flames were unable to promptly start a fire in this jungle due to their short duration, then they would naturally be unable to quickly burn the rope off. While they might leave scorch marks on

the rope and, perhaps, even reduce its durability, the rope should not have any issues lasting the mere thirty meters Deep Waters would needed to be dragged through.

As for the poor Thieves attempting to hold Deep Waters down... Gu Fei was running beside the Hunter as War Without Wounds dragged him off, so the three Thieves that came hurtling toward Deep Waters simply morphed into white lights.

Deep Waters was yelping nonstop as he was dragged across the jungle floor. The path he was being dragged through was filled with traps, so who knew how many of them did he trigger as he tumbled and slid through the dirt and mud? Gu Fei, who was just behind him, watched in fascination as the traps clamping on to Deep Waters grow in number.

Even more Mages, Thieves, and Archers appeared from behind the trees to mount a rescue, yet the players of Yunduan City that were enjoying the show Gu Fei had put up finally returned to their senses at this point. With Oathless Sword's roar, Youthful Reflection took command of Traversing Four Seas' well-practiced archer formation to unleash a rain of arrows. Deep Waters, who was being dragged while facing the sky, felt awestruck when he saw this uniform barrage of arrows flying through the sky. This was considered as a hallmark of Traversing Four Seas, so it was not something anyone would see anywhere else easily.

The would-be rescuers poking their heads out from behind the trees became victims to this volley of arrows, with over ten of them losing their lives and the remaining ones hastily fleeing with arrows stuck on them. What made this matter worse was that their response to this assault revealed their positions to Yunduan City's players, and the squad of Sharpshooters was able to tell which tree they had squirreled themselves behind with Eagle Eye.

Arrows were cheap and plentiful, so the Archers did not feel much heartache from squandering them. Now that they had the chance to vent their anger after all this time, they continued to fire

off arrows after arrows on the enemies even though the targets themselves were no longer in sight. So many arrows were spent that the barks of the trees that the enemies were hiding behind were gradually chipped off, as though they were being gunned by automatic rifles.

Those who were more familiar with this jungle were naturally able to escape this assault by positioning themselves in blind spots. Nonetheless, most of them could only lean in close behind the trees, not even daring to reveal a finger to the firing squad.

Deep Waters was finally dragged by War Without Wounds all the way back into the expedition's encirclement at this point. Gu Fei did not suffer any further interruptions under the cover of Traversing Four Seas' archer formation and successfully managed to make his way back to the group amid everyone's complex look.

"Drunk bro's just too d*mn OP! You're my idol!" Sakurazaka Moony was the first to compliment him.

Gu Fei merely smiled. He was already used to being praised by others.

Sakurazaka Moony proceeded to lower his head and smile at Deep Waters. "You're my idol as well! You definitely live up to your title as the number one trap expert; you're even all suit up with traps! HA HA HA HA!"

Deep Waters was angered and in excruciating pain. His whole body was riddled with traps clamping down on him. There were even three additional traps caught on his head besides the initial trap that was still biting on his nose; two were entangled in his hair while one was stuck on his ear. The rest could be found densely ensnared on his arms, legs, thighs, chest, and even his back. The sight of these traps angered Oathless Sword. "You b*st*rd, packing in so many traps in just these thirty meters; you're a real piece of work!"

Other players were also discussing this matter among

themselves.

“Does the effect of traps stack together?” War Without Wounds asked.

“I don’t think so,” Brother Assist answered.

“Would be pretty great if it did! With so many traps on him, who knows when he’ll be able to move again?!” War Without Wounds said.

“He he... You should feel honored for this once-in-a-lifetime chance to have so many traps clamping on your whole body!” Royal God Call expressed thoughtfully.

Sakurazaka Moony suddenly felt agonized amid his elation. “D*mn! Why can the system film everything, while we players can’t take a photo or even screenshot anything?”

The mention of the video reminded Deep Waters of something. Turning to eye Gu Fei for a moment, he eventually asked, “Are you that Video Mage from Yunduan City?”

“He he. Now you know the meaning of fear!” Sakurazaka Moony was gleeful, as though he were the one who had captured Deep Waters by himself.

Deep Waters did not even register Sakurazaka Moony’s taunting and only sighed once he confirmed Gu Fei’s identity, “You’re indeed an indomitable existence.”

“Thank you!” Gu Fei did not bother to show modesty that was the appropriate behavior for a kung fu practitioner like him, as outsiders would probably see it as facetious. Moreover, it would make people more envious since only the real deal could pull off being modest without appearing arrogant.

A metallic clank was heard when the duration of trap that had first ensnared Deep Waters ended, automatically falling off of Deep Waters and leaving him with a cute-looking red nose.

The other traps on his body were triggered over a short period of time so, like domino effect, they all fell off one after another.

“He he he!” The players’ discussion reignited once more.

“That’s also a world’s first!” Royal God Call said admiringly like before.

“[A swimmer runs the risk of drowning; an experienced rider is prone to falling!](#) What a tried and tested saying!” Brother Assist waxed eloquently once more.

Deep Waters deeply sighed in relief and slowly crawled to his feet when the final trap wore off. The rope was still tied to his leg, but he did not really care much for it. Deep Waters stood up straight, dusted himself, and appreciated the Archers’ watchful gazes with a nod. “That’s quite the archer formation you’ve got there.”

“D*mn! You’re still acting cool!” Sakurazaka Moony rolled up his sleeves, as though he would beat Deep Waters up, when he heard a metallic clank. Looking down in disbelief, he saw his foot actually being clamped on by a Hunter’s trap. He was now immobile and could not take a step over.

“Ha ha ha ha ha!” Deep Waters laughed uproariously. “You should be convinced on who the true number one trap expert in Parallel World is now!”

Everyone gawked at the trap on Sakurazaka Moony’s foot. He was right beside Deep Waters, and the trap was not completely restricting his movement, so he could still punch the man if he wanted to, yet he was no longer in the mood to do so, as the truth of the matter left him in shock.

Sakurazaka Moony was very confident with his trapping skills, yet even he did not realize when Deep Waters had set this particular trap on the ground. Although no one would truly think that Deep Waters would still have the heart to throw a trap out in such a situation, the real question here was that how did he

actually set up the trap right under everyone's very noses and watchful eyes?

While Oathless Sword was rather shocked by his feat, he did not really attach importance to it, as his focus was entirely on his guild quest. As such, he merely scowled at Deep Waters and said, "Deep Waters is it? Let's have a good chat!"

Deep Waters chuckled. "There's nothing to talk about, really. This is a MMO; defeating the enemy by killing the chief won't work here. Although I have fallen into your hands, my comrades will continue to wage war against you – the way I've instructed them. My death will at most cause me to drop a level, which is nothing much in the grand scheme of things. I'm not even worth being a hostage here." When that was said, he turned to face the silent Gu Fei. "I really don't get it why you would waste so much effort into capturing me!"

Gu Fei shook his head. "Focus on the matter at hand first. Come get your revenge when you're bored. Oh. Just so you know: capturing you wasn't difficult in the least!"

"Tsk!" Deep Waters continued to act indifferent to the situation. The look of defiance on his face resembled that of a dead pig that was unafraid of the boiling water when he turned to address Oathless Sword once more, "Don't worry; there's no escape for you. My men and I currently hold the advantage in time and place, so the wisest move for you is to hand me over and avoid the confrontation. Everyone wins—"

"You wish!" Oathless Sword quickly interjected.

"Welp. Everyone saw that. I've given you guys a chance, but your boss has actually rejected my peace offering. I can't do anything about it." Deep Waters shrugged his shoulders as he turned to address the crowd. He then gazed at Gu Fei lastly, "You should talk some sense into him!" An outsider like Deep Waters was naturally unaware that Gu Fei was unrelated to Oathless Sword in any shape

or form; he only thought that, given this Mage's prowess, it was a certainty that he would have quite a high status in a guild.

This was when someone from the crowd emotionlessly said, "While this may just be a game, it's not that easy to court death like this."

"That's right! Let's string this man up and beat him!" Deep Waters' actions and words riled the crowd up; someone even reached down to pick up the rope still tied to his feet.

However, the man did not seem to care for their threatening words, simply laughing darkly. "Are you guys idiots? We gamers are beaten daily when we play this MMO; why would any of us play this game if we're afraid of pain?"

What he said made sense. The pain gauge of Parallel World was entirely unrealistic. In any case, nobody would actually continue playing a combat-focused MMO where the player would get hacked and injured oftentimes if the pain was completely simulated. Considering the unfortunate incidents that had occurred during the game's open beta, it had improved by leaps and bounds ever since its revamp. No matter how hard they struck, there was a limit to the pain a player would feel, so anyone with a bit of willpower was more than capable of withstanding it.

Physical punishment looked to be a pointless, but it was the reprehensible man who always opted to take the low road and came up with a wondrously deplorable idea. Leaping out, Sakurazaka Moony yelled, "Let's flick his d*ck a hundred times!"

"Ahem!" The more upstanding players among them felt rather embarrassed by this suggestion. There were many ladies among them right now, after all! Were Sakurazaka Moony and his group not in this place because the Amethyst Rebirth ladies were over here?

"Gotta stay professional!" Gu Fei patted Sakurazaka Moony.

The meaning behind this saying gets lost in the translation. Anyway, it implies that experts or experienced men often find failure whenever they overestimate themselves or fail to account for the possible risks of their actions due to arrogance or carelessness. It works as a cautionary tale of how modesty and the need to account for things outside the realm of calculation are essential no matter how experienced someone is.

Another stratagem in the 36 Stratagems. It basically means cutting off the head of the hydra (to kill the beast) or taking down a whole organization by eliminating its leader.

Chapter 326 - Hostage Plan

Sakurazaka Moony's suggestion was truly repugnant, and it caused the nearby players to feel embarrassed for him. Still, such a reprehensible method would often yield unexpected results. Deep Waters' expression visibly changed once he heard Sakurazaka Moony's recommendation, with his heart even fluttering involuntarily. However, he quickly consoled himself, Relax, it's not possible for them to do that. The system will surely restrict them!

The system indeed had a restriction placed on such acts – a change brought about by the violent and indecent situations that had occurred on the first day of Parallel World's open beta. While the system did not restrict players from stripping themselves down, those intending to rape or sexually harass others were prevented by it from doing so. This did not mean that players could freely streak in the nude or become flashers, since such indecent acts were also closely monitored by the system.

In fact, the system catching sexual offenders and predators was a lot easier than cops catching criminals in reality. Once the system detected a sexual offender, the person's account would instantly be deleted and the user himself or herself would subsequently be blacklisted. The game company even held the rights to sue such sort of individuals. Therefore, if any victims lodged complaints against their attackers, the players' indecent activities in-game would come to haunt them even in reality.

This was why, besides the players' wild acts on that first day of open beta, no similar incidents had occurred again thus far.

At this moment, Deep Waters was reassuring himself using that rule as he maintained an aloof air. When he saw plenty of the surrounding players being repulsed by that idea, Deep Waters once more revealed a placid smile of contentment on his face.

Oathless Sword could no longer stand his look. Stepping forward, he planted his fist on Deep Waters' face. The people standing behind the Hunter quickly dispersed to make a path out, which caused Deep Waters to fly out a short distance away from that punch.

Oathless Sword picked up the rope tied to Deep Waters' legs from War Without Wounds and violently jerked it to pull the Hunter back toward him.

Deep Waters wiped the corner of his mouth as he laughed mirthlessly. "That didn't even hurt a bit!" He then climbed to his feet once more and stared at Oathless Sword. "But I won't be forgetting that punch...."

"You're still trying to threaten me!" Oathless Sword was about to punch him again, yet two hands unexpectedly shot out to grab his shoulders that then spoke the same line, "Forget it!"

Oathless Sword's fist stopped mid-air as he looked to Gu Fei on the left and Drifting on the right. These two looked at each other, evidently surprised that the other had stepped out to stop Oathless Sword as well.

Gu Fei had been present on the scene from the start, while Drifting had come out of nowhere. Deep Waters squinted his eyes before chuckling. "Drifting, it's you. Why are you here? Did you drift and wander your way to Yunduan City?"

Drifting nodded. "I didn't know that you went to Linyin City, though."

"I've been here for quite some time now," Deep Waters said.

Everyone looked from one man to the other. Oathless Sword originally wanted to ask why Drifting did not mention knowing someone in Linyin City before, but the two's conversation answered his question: Drifting did not know that Deep Waters was in this city.

While Drifting was Parallel World's number one Mage and among the Five Unyielding Experts, he was the typical Mage that would not be found standing on the outer circle like Gu Fei. Therefore, Gu Fei's quick-and-clean 'kidnapping' of Deep Waters was only witnessed by the nearby players, while the rest only became aware of it after news about it reached their assigned positions. Drifting only made his way over after hearing Deep Waters' IGN being mentioned.

"Are you two friends?" Oathless Sword furrowed his brows as he asked Drifting.

There were pros and cons to this potential friendship; Deep Waters might give Drifting face and let them go if things worked out, but it was also possible for Drifting to be the one giving face to Deep Waters by not making things difficult for the Hunter.

Today was apparently not Traversing Four Seas' lucky day, as Drifting merely replied with: "Sorta." His tone made it obvious that he and Deep Waters did not have a deep friendship. Meanwhile, Deep Waters had easily seen through Oathless Sword's thought and he laughed coldly. "Even if we are close, my comrades here have been with me through thick and thin, so I'll never let anything get in our way."

Oathless Sword was about to punch him again but Gu Fei persuaded him otherwise, "Forget it. Hitting him isn't gonna solve anything besides venting a bit of your frustration."

"Hmph. At least, this brother here has some brain in him." Deep Waters had a rather good impression of Gu Fei.

"Find a way to break out of this encirclement first. Let's just call it quits and kill him right off the bat," Gu Fei continued.

"D*mn! You're evil!" The impression he had of Gu Fei instantly bottomed out.

Oathless Sword contemplated about this for a while before

casting Deep Waters a sidelong glance. “At least, this guy has a bit of integrity in him. Since he’s worried about his comrades, wouldn’t they reciprocate as well? Let’s drag him to the front and yell at his buddies – threaten them a little.”

“That’s childish – really childish. We’re gamers, so such a situation is to be expected. Our guild already made an arrangement that no person, including me, will take priority over the guild. Give it a try if you don’t believe me!” Deep Waters was unruffled by this.

“Let’s go, then!” Oathless Sword waved his arm.

Gu Fei, who had been standing beside Oathless Sword, ignored his command and turned to leave, instead. He obviously disliked doing this sort of things. Deep Waters laughed aloud when he saw this. “This brother is quite the character; I truly admire your ways!”

Oathless Sword commanded Gu Fei, yet the latter blatantly disobeyed him, causing him to lose face. However, he had no way of chastising Gu Fei, so he just passed the order to some of Traversing Four Seas’ members to do the deed. Before going, Oathless Sword made sure to get in a few more licks at Deep Waters. He only felt reassured to let Deep Waters be escorted out after making sure that he was holding the rope tightly in his hand.

Youthful Reflection was still commanding the players in the archer formation to rain arrows on the enemies. When Deep Waters was escorted to the front, they temporarily stopped their enfilade of attacks as the Traversing Four Seas’ men began to shout according to their boss’s instruction. “People in this jungle, listen up! Your boss is in our hands right now. Put down your weapons, remove the traps, and leave the forest! Otherwise, you’ll have to pick up your boss from a spawn point!”

No one answered this shout of theirs.

“Shout it once more and count to ten!” Oathless Sword ordered.

“Count, my *ss! Just kill me if you want. Nagging so much, it’s clear your guild won’t have much of a future with you at its helm,” Deep Waters impatiently grumbled.

Oathless Sword completely ignored him. Coming to the front, he shouted the words himself, “People in this jungle, listen closely! I will now count to three! If you don’t act the way we have instructed, we’ll kill your boss first and play with you guys again! I’ll begin the count now!” It was obvious that Oathless Sword had long since lost his patience. He had ordered his men to count for ten seconds moments ago, yet he had changed it to three seconds now that he was the one speaking.

“One!” Oathless Sword bellowed.

There was no response.

“Two!” he yelled once more.

There was still no response.

Oathless Sword began to slowly lift his claymore.

“Three!” Once he shouted this, Oathless Sword’s claymore came crashing down. Evidently, he was not all talk. Since he did not hold much hope for this method to begin with, he might as well just go for broke. Even if it was useless, it was still better to slay Deep Waters. The situation would remain unchanged even if they kept Deep Waters alive, so Oathless Sword decided to just kill him off. Not only would he be able to vent his frustrations by doing so, it could also boost the morale of his troops.

“HOLD IT!” Just as the claymore came crashing down, a distinct shout was heard coming from deep within the jungle.

Oathless Sword’s eyes glinted, but he did not stop his claymore’s descent. It was nothing but a basic attack, after all. Oathless Sword’s Strength was not at the level where he could insta-kill a player. He originally wanted to slash Deep Waters a few more times, but with the enemies finally reacting, he unwillingly

stopped his attack after that one cleave.

“Who shouted that?!” Instead of feeling relieved, Deep Waters was angered by his comrade’s yell.

Someone, who looked like a Mage, appeared from behind a certain tree. The man glanced at the rather haggard-looking Deep Waters being held hostage by Oathless Sword and showed a pained expression. Turning his gaze over to Oathless Sword, the man said, “We’ll remove the traps; just let him go!”

“Did you drink too d*mn much? We have an agreement about this!” Deep Waters roared, “Just ignore me!”

The man avoided looking at Deep Waters again and merely kept his gaze trained on Oathless Sword.

Oathless Sword revealed a victorious smile. “Honorable men, indeed. What a bunch of good comrades you’ve got there. When the quest is over, there’s a high chance of us becoming good friends with you guys. Please go ahead!” After saying this, he made a be-my-guest gesture.

The Mage waved his arm and countless Archers began removing the traps that they had set up. It was clear how well-trained they were based on their movement.

Oathless Sword surveyed his surroundings and his eyes promptly turned cold, saying, “When I said traps, I meant all of them.”

The Mage did not speak, but his contemplative look signified that he was currently sending out a message on a channel. In no time at all, more Archers appeared from behind the trees and began to remove the traps. The number of men that had emerged gave the players from Yunduan City quite the shock.

Excluding those who remained out of sight, at least two hundred players were out and about. The Traversing Four Seas’ players had expended great effort in developing the level of their guild, but they were currently just at level 5 with seven hundred fifty

members. Oathless Sword estimated that the enemies would probably have that same number. Still, just from this scene alone, Deep Waters' group seemed to have over two hundred Archers – all of them being Hunters. Was this job-class composition not seem a little over the top? Considering these men were busy removing the traps, they appeared to not have just set up one trap each. Was it possible for every Hunter present to actually be capable of setting up more than one trap?

These Hunters showed a level of skill that left the watching crowd breathless. After completing the task assigned to them, these Hunters stepped aside and quietly watched the players from Yunduan City. The Mage turned to address Oathless Sword, “We’ve held up our end of the bargain; release him.”

“Idiots! You’re all a bunch of idiots!” Deep Waters was pissed and moved by his comrades’ integrity. Burying his head, he moaned.

“Moony, go take a look!” Oathless Sword motioned.

Sakurazaka Moony nodded his head as he went forward. Going around the entire border, he turned his head over to say, “There are no more traps.”

Oathless Sword was extremely satisfied with this. This feeling of victory was just too great, and he could not help but wish to share about his impressiveness. As such, he coolly smiled to the Mage and said, “May I ask which direction should we head to reach Linyin City?”

“That way.” The Mage pointed toward a certain direction, which was coincidentally where Sakurazaka Moony had just checked for traps.

Oathless Sword nodded his head in relief. “Thanks.” Now that he was feeling good, Oathless Sword courteously but confidently addressed the Mage, “We’ll automatically release Brother Deep Waters from our custody once we depart.”

Oathless Sword gathered the expedition once he said his piece, preparing to head in the direction that the Mage had indicated. Unexpectedly, someone suddenly stepped out from the crowd and lazily waved his arm. “Wait a sec!”

Chapter 327 - Old Friends

A male Priest with womanly good looks, reeking of alcohol stepped out. Who else could this person be but Young Master Han?

The players from Yunduan City had just moved to leave the location, yet Young Master Han had actually come to the very front to stop their forward advance. This man then lackadaisically approached Oathless Sword and his men with a smile on his face. “Naïve. Quite naïve.”

“Brother Han, just what do you mean by that?!” Oathless Sword was in a good mood, so Young Master Han’s unexpected censure made him feel rather disgruntled.

“I’m not referring to you; I’m talking about him.” Young Master Han pointed at Deep Waters.

Deep Waters, who was being pulled forward by Oathless Sword, still had the rope firmly restricting his legs. Oathless Sword turned to look at the Hunter, only to see the aloof expression on Deep Waters’ face missing. At the moment, the man was staring rigidly at Young Master Han.

“You’re quite the actor, huh,” Young Master Han drawled as he pointed his finger to Deep Waters, adding, “But while you can fool others, you’re acting can’t deceive me.”

“What’s going on?” Oathless Sword was at a loss.

“It’s all an act.” Although Young Master Han turned to look at Oathless Sword, his eyes were glazed over. This made all the people present suspect that it was the alcohol talking. Meanwhile, Oathless Sword felt compelled to probe deeper, “What do you mean?”

“There’s only one thing you should believe,” Young Master Han said.

“And that is?”

“Their guild will definitely not sacrifice the benefit of its entirety over the life of one person, even if it’s the guild leader himself,” Young Master Han replied.

“This...” Oathless Sword violently looked around him and saw that the enemy Hunters had concealed themselves behind the trees once more.

“If we continue onward, there’ll surely be a grand ambush waiting for us. Perhaps, it’s even big enough to wipe us all out.” Young Master Han smiled.

“So what you’re saying is that they are just pretending to let us go in exchange for Deep Waters’ life so as to make us lower our guard against the big ambush that they’ve set for us ahead?” Oathless Sword was surprised.

“Precisely. They stopped caring for Deep Waters’ fate the moment he got himself captured. Everything they just did is just a ruse,” Young Master Han explained as he stared at Deep Waters.

“How could that be...” Oathless Sword could hardly believe it.

“Still, the greatest actor among them is of course Brother Deep Waters here. He came here acting quite the scoundrel and successfully provoking you to do exactly what he wanted. You’re currently thinking of making full use of this vile person that is in the palm of your hands to not let yourself down, right?” Young Master Han continued to smile.

Oathless Sword did not say a word in response to this.

“As for him, time and time again, he’s emphasized his worthlessness as a hostage. Hearing him say that repeatedly, you must have started wondering whether his claim of being useless as a hostage is true or not. Later, you were presented with what seemed like quite the honorable comrades of Deep Waters. You probably thought that although the fallen flower may not have cared for its end, perhaps the flowing water might show mercy.

You're not gonna lose out either way, so it probably won't hurt to try... And when you did try it and succeeded, you felt pleased with yourself deep down. Unfortunately, that was when you completely fell for his scheme," Young Master Han deduced.

Oathless Sword remained mum about his deduction, yet his face steadily grew ghastly white. Gu Fei, who had been standing on the side all along, heard Young Master Han's dissection of the enemies' intentions while ridiculing the parties involved at length. He figured that it was not good to antagonize Oathless Sword like this, since he might shred Deep Waters into pieces in response to this humiliation, so he quickly interjected, "Since you have so much to say, why didn't you warn us about it after seeing through all this?!"

"I'm doing that right now, aren't I?" Young Master Han noncommittally shrugged his shoulders. Gu Fei strongly suspected him of intentionally waiting for when Oathless Sword was at the peak of his happiness before exposing this whole charade to brutally let Oathless Sword experience the sensation of falling straight to hell after being on cloud nine. Gu Fei was convinced that this was precisely the sort of sadistic enjoyment that was Young Master Han's cup of tea.

"To think even you would be here as well!" It was Deep Waters who had actually spoken up. "Where's Sword Demon?"

All the players felt shocked when they heard him ask this. None of them had expected Deep Waters, Young Master Han, and Sword Demon to know one another. And from the way he interacted with Young Master Han, it was clear that Deep Waters was better acquainted with him and Sword Demon than with Drifting. Oathless Sword felt aggrieved upon learning that there were other comrades possibly connected to the enemy: Just how hard was it for him to get some payback today?

Sword Demon nimbly slipped out from the crowd in a timely manner and stood beside Young Master Han, nodding his head

toward Deep Waters. “Over here!”

“You two... How did you two become some other guild’s underlings?” Deep Waters was nonplussed.

“We’re now a for-hire mercenary group,” Sword Demon explained.

“Oh...” Deep Waters hummed, “I was actually wondering about how large this guild is for there to be so many players present... And why does it feel like most of the guys are mercenaries... F*ck! Wear your emblem proudly if you’re from the guild, just where is your d*mn guild spirit?!”

Oathless Sword could no longer stand this convoluted scenario. Rushing over cursing, he irately asked to Young Master Han and Sword Demon, “Brother Han, Brother Sword Demon, neither of you will mind if I kill this man since he’s openly clashing with our quest, right?”

Both men nodded their heads in unison. “Go ahead!”

Everyone around was perplexed. Were these people actually friends or foes?

Deep Waters did not seem to mind this himself. Standing straight and assuming his look of disregard once more, he said to Young Master Han and Sword Demon, “Neither of you can escape, either. I’ll come by the Priest Academy and Thieves’ Union to pick you guys up. We’ll share some drinks tonight.” With that, he nodded toward Young Master Han. “I’ll treat Sword Demon, but you’re paying for yourself.”

“Hmph. I’d dissuade you from getting in our way; otherwise, you’ll be the one losing two whole levels tonight,” Young Master Han said evenly.

“Heh. Guess we’ll just wait and see!” Deep Waters ended his conversation with the two men and turned to face Oathless Sword with a withering gaze. “Why haven’t you struck me yet? Dragging

this out, second guessing yourself... You're so clueless on how to reciprocate people's feelings! Can't you change that style of yours?"

"Clueless to reciprocate people's feelings?" Everyone was baffled.

"He he... I'm just saying whatever comes to my mind." Deep Waters was still all smiles even when he was literally right at death's door.

"Go to hell!" Oathless Sword was certain that he would be annoyed to death if he did not kill the man right now. The claymore in his hand was raised and came cleaving down the man's head. To his surprise, a flash of fiery glow appeared right beside Deep Waters, causing the Hunter to curiously turn around and witness Gu Fei kill him in one blow.

Deep Waters disappeared in a flash of white light, causing Oathless Sword to cleave nothing but empty air. He glared at Gu Fei with fury. "What are you doing?!"

"My attack is cleaner," Gu Fei calmly replied.

Oathless Sword grinded his teeth hard, but he did not say a word of protest to this.

The mercenaries of Young Master's Elite ignored Oathless Sword. Following his exchange with Oathless Sword, Gu Fei turned to ask the two, "Are you guys old friends?"

"Of course. We've spent countless years making a living in MMOs, so why would we not have friends of our own? Do you think we're a noob like you?!" Young Master Han scoffed.

Everyone sweated profusely when they heard that. The most illustrious, powerful, and fearsome Mage, who had footage as proof, was actually being treated as a noob. Only horror could describe their feeling right now.

Fortunately, Gu Fei was an honest soul. If anyone had called him a noob in relation to kung fu, that offender's mother would most

likely not recognize the person after Gu Fei was done with his punishment. Being called a gaming noob, meanwhile, was something he was willing to accept. Still, Gu Fei felt it was necessary to retaliate in any way possible, as it was Young Master Han who had said this, causing him to reply, “Watch what you say. You should know how impulsive I am when it comes to killing, even if it is you.”

“F*ck!” The color on Young Master Han’s face blanched a little when he heard this. He then fished out another bottle of liquor from his dimensional pocket and drunkenly sauntered away.

The surrounding players stood stock-still for quite some time as they repeatedly replayed the exchange in their heads. When they came back to their senses, their first question was: Just what are they planning to do?!

“Now what?” Everyone turned to look at Oathless Sword.

Dark clouds hung over Oathless Sword’s head. Killing Deep Waters was supposed to be his way of alleviating some of the pent-up frustration and anxiety he had inside him, yet Gu Fei literally snatched that chance right under his very nose. With nowhere to vent this anger anymore, he had half the mind to just thrash anyone he saw. When the oblivious players turned to ask him for further instructions, he actually roared in a fit of rage, “D*mm*t! Let’s just charge and go all out with them!”

“Calm down!” Youthful Reflection hurriedly interrupted. Gale Force also came over to coax him.

“This group of b*st*rds, I’ll show them what’s what sooner or later!” Oathless Sword gritted his teeth. As for who those people included in ‘this group of b*st*rds’ comment were, be they existing outside the novel itself or otherwise, all should think of it for themselves; probing any deeper would be a fruitless endeavor in this case.

“Let’s just try to come up with a solution!” Youthful Reflection

urged.

“Do you have any ideas?” Oathless Sword asked.

“Uhm... I’m still thinking... I originally had a good grasp of their situation, but since the enemies have probably reorganized and positioned themselves again, I now have no clue as to what their current condition is,” Youthful Reflection reasoned.

“Moony can locate the traps and Miles can counter Stealth, right? Let’s get them to work together and uncover all the traps!” Oathless Sword suggested.

“They have removed the traps just then; surely, there wouldn’t be any Hunting Trap anymore?” Youthful Reflection replied with uncertainty.

“Then, what do we have to fear if there ain’t any traps? Let’s just charge straight at them!” Oathless Sword insisted.

“Calm down, calm down...” Youthful Reflection could tell that Oathless Sword was currently not in the right state to discuss the matter at hand, so he decisively dragged him to the side and forced him to take a rest. “Take a break first; I’ll look for others to discuss this.” He practically ran away after saying this. Oathless Sword was too dangerous to be with when in this state, so it was best to give him a wide berth.

When Youthful Reflection said that he would look for people to discuss the matter, he actually meant calling on a meeting with the other guild members who could come up with ideas and the various mercenary leaders. All were already aware of their current predicament. After experiencing and surviving the traps and ambushes laid earlier, these leaders felt rather intimidated by the lengths at which their enemies had gone to in order to eradicate them. Therefore, hardly anyone was in high spirits at the moment.

“Moony, have the enemies set up the traps again?” Youthful Reflection asked. Under the cover-fire of Traversing Four Seas’

archer formation just then, The Great Hunting had conducted another search around them.

Sakurazaka Moony's expression was still grim. "They've set them up again, so the situation remains unchanged from when we started. I really can't figure out how they are able to lay those traps without us knowing...."

A poem verse reference, and the meaning of which is a reflection of the situation: While the subject in question may be indifferent or even resigned to fate, others may have a different opinion.

Chapter 328 - Mopping with Brave Souls

Young Master Han, who was standing on the side, laughed. “It’s not really difficult to understand this. Since the enemies were able to trap us the first time around without us getting alerted by their movement, why couldn’t they do so this time as well?”

Sakurazaka Moony froze. It made sense when he thought about it that way.

Glancing on their surroundings, Young Master Han continued, “This terrain is just too ideal for Hunters to do their thing. There are almost a thousand of us in plain sight, so they can see our every movement. In contrast, we can’t see our enemies and plenty of things are obstructing our view.”

Everyone nodded in agreement.

Youthful Reflection turned to regard Young Master Han. “Does Brother Han have any solution to this?”

“Presently, our pressing issue is how to deal with those traps. By finding a way to remove those traps, we can fearlessly clash with the enemies,” Young Master Han concluded.

Well, duh! Although no one uttered these words aloud, their faces clearly showed exasperation. Young Master Han raised the bottle of liquor in his hand to his lips and took a swig. “I’ve thought of a way to remove the traps, but I don’t know if anyone is willing to execute it.”

“What’s the method?” Youthful Reflection eagerly asked.

Young Master Han chuckled as he answered, “Human minesweeping.”

Everyone was stunned but quickly recovered. That was because Deep Waters had demonstrated to them a solo act of human minesweeping just earlier. However, such a method that treated one as a mere tool would be entirely humiliating to the person

involved, so whether a player would be willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good was the real question here.

Take Deep Waters as an example; his entire body got covered with traps, and while the pain was tolerable, the way he looked, with even his head having four traps hanging on it, was just too distressing. Humans were naturally prideful creatures, and many people considered their image to be far more important than their lives. This was even more so in MMOs where lives were not worth much. As such, most of the players here would rather become suicide bombers than become living minesweepers.

Silence reigned after Young Master Han's announcement of this idea. This persisted for quite a while until a bright fiery light flashed from within the main body of the expedition. The enemy Mages had evidently borrowed the cover of the dense trees to bring forth another wave of bombardment on them.

This time, however, the players from Yunduan City were ready for the enemies. The Archers and Mages, who had discovered the enemy Mages, immediately began firing back. However, only a few of the enemy Mages lost their lives in this round of assault, as they quickly retreated into the forest's cover upon launching their spells. In fact, the Yunduan City's players suffered worse; with traps isolating them in this area, plenty got injured or even lost their lives when their other comrades stampeded about in their haste to get into safety.

Knowing that their situation should not drag on any further, Youthful Reflection finally said, "Mr. Han's suggestion just might work. Will your mercenary group take the lead on this?"

Young Master Han smiled. "You'll have to discuss this matter with them; I won't have any part in this."

Everyone cast each other a sidelong glance after hearing his words. This was his suggestion in the first place, so if he would not do it himself, then did that not mean that he wanted others to

become the laughingstock by employing it?

“Is any mercenary leader out there willing to take on this important task?” Youthful Reflection asked the others.

“Since this task is as you’ve said, important, small groups like ours may have difficulty accomplishing it. We think it’s best for the bigger groups to do it!” Some leaders of small mercenary groups were the first to express their view on the matter.

“Ahem... This... I feel... Is a little dangerous...” a few leaders of the large mercenary groups haltingly expressed their unwillingness to take on the task.

“It’s truly too heavy of a task for us. We don’t think that we can handle it, as well,” the remaining leaders expressed their unwillingness as well.

“This job doesn’t necessarily have to be done by us, mercenaries! Anyone can do it, so why don’t Reflection bro form a team by gathering those players who are able to take on this important task,” one mercenary leader suggested.

Seeing that no one was willing to take on the job, Youthful Reflection figured he could only use his killer move: money assault!

He waved his hand and declared, “I will have to trouble the leaders present to announce this to your men: anyone who is willing to take on this job will be paid 300 gold coins each.”

The sum of 300 gold coins was definitely not a meager payday. Going by the market price mercenary groups used, even the most difficult quest would not allow their members to receive 100 gold coins each. Since difficult quests would usually require more mercenaries to participate in it, splitting the additional earnings among a larger number of people made it so that each individual might not profit much. Offering 300 gold coins to each ‘volunteer’ essentially created a new record, which just showed that while the

job was not particularly laborious, Youthful Reflection was aware that it was a difficult request to fulfill.

Each leader whistled in approval of his generous offer and moved to disseminate it to their men. Youthful Reflection did not stay idle, either, and extended the offer to his guildmates. It would be great if someone among his men was willing to take on this task. Nutrient-rich water would not flow to an outsider's field this way, and the 300 gold coins could be treated as a reward to their men.

'Exorbitant rewards attract brave men' was an adage that held truth even now. Once the message was sent, many players from mercenary groups and Traversing Four Seas answered to the call.

Youthful Reflection felt disappointed when he saw that only a handful of his guildmates wanted to take part in this task. They were all professional gamers that he knew – people that made a living from gaming. They would be hard at work farming gold every day. Any in-game currency or equipment they got would be exchanged for real-world currency for their expenses outside the game. Thus, no matter how many coins these players earned, they would never squander them. These men did not care to own the best of the best equipment, as being sufficiently geared was already enough for them.

These players' goal was to earn money, so why would they bother on improving their own strength and skills in-game? What came naturally to any other gamers was actually strictly calculated by these men. For example, if they needed additional 5 points to Strength to accomplish a certain undertaking that could earn them 200 gold coins, they would readily spend a hundred gold coins on a piece of equipment that could grant them that extra 5 points. On the contrary, these men would never be compelled to spend even 1 bronze coin for additional 5 points to Strength that only served the purpose of improving their weapons' effect or their Attack Power.

Most people assumed that professional gamers were high level, had exceptional equipment, and possessed remarkable skills. In

actuality, most professional gamers only had high levels due to them devoting a lot of time to playing a MMO. And while they had different types of equipment for different situations, those were usually rather average. Moreover, their skills were usually highly specialized; those who were good at questing would usually not bother honing their PvP capabilities.

Most guilds would not accept many but would take in a few of such type of players for when something cropped up that only they could solve. In any case, they were rather helpful to their guilds in their own ways. Youthful Reflection did not really like this sort of players, so when he saw these guidmates volunteering for the task, he knew that they would transfer their earning in their bank accounts immediately after; there was no way these players would invest it in better equipment to improve their skills.

Youthful Reflection sighed. Anyway, since he would surely be parting ways with this sum later, he figured these guidmates earning the money was better than outsiders earning it. After selecting a few of these professional gamers, Youthful Reflection asked Young Master Han, “Brother Han, how many players do you reckon we’ll need for this particular task?”

“Ten should do.” Young Master Han smiled at these brave souls who had come to offer their services in exchange for monetary rewards.

“Right...” Youthful Reflection started choosing the mercenaries for the task. His choice was not influenced by level, equipment, or skill; instead, he focused on finding the tall and stout players that had a larger surface area, since they would more efficiently clear out the traps out there!

As he was slowly considering each player, Youthful Reflection received a surprise by what he saw. “Does this lady here really wish to participate in this task?”

“Yup! I’ve never done such a task before!” the lady happily

replied.

Youthful Reflection was extremely astonished. He had never expected that a lady would be willing to roll on the ground and bear the traps for some coins. Youthful Reflection found such a thought to be rather unbearable, so he feebly said, “You won’t do.”

“Why?” The lady was flummoxed upon hearing his words.

“Uh... We need people like this!” Youthful Reflection patted the tall and stocky man standing next to her.

The lady stared at the player, nonplussed. “What sort is that?”

“The tall and big sort.” Youthful Reflection approved the man’s body type. With such a body frame, their human minesweeping plan could be carried out more easily.

“I’m pretty strong, you know!” The lady said as she slapped the well-built man, striking him down to the ground. “Look. I’m even stronger than him!” She beamed.

“It’s not an issue of Strength.” Youthful Reflection wiped nonexistent sweat off his forehead as he took two steps away from her. The lady’s Strength was no joke, and the man she had struck to the ground had yet to get up. Although the player looked well-built, he was actually just a Priest....

“Then, what’s the problem?” the lady asked.

“Uhm... This... Well...” Youthful Reflection struggled to explain this plainly. Fortunately, someone stepped out from the crowd and tugged at the lady. “Xiaoyu, you’re definitely not suitable for this task.”

“Sis Luo Luo, why is that? Why am I unsuitable?” June’s Rain seemed rather aggrieved.

“It’s because this task needs male players,” Luo Luo explained.

“Oh, so that’s why!” June’s Rain nodded. “Since that’s the case, I’ll back out, then.” With that, she turned to leave the selection.

Youthful Reflection was rooted to the spot until the stocky Priest climbed to his feet while massaging his shoulder. “F*ck me! An All-Strength Warrior?”

Luo Luo bestowed Heal on the man. “Are you alright?”

“I’m okay.” Fortunately, the Priest was big-hearted enough to not mind getting knocked off his feet by a slap.

Youthful Reflection shook his head to clear his thoughts. Everything that had just happened was like a dream sequence. Focusing back on the task at hand, he quickly completed selecting from the remaining crowd. Including his few guildmates, there were ten players. Without further ado, each of the ten men was given 300 gold coins, which amounted to a total of 3000 gold coins. Other players sighed in awe over the dispensing of this hefty amount of coins, but besides those players who did not make the cut, none was envious in the least.

Young Master Han stood up once the selection was concluded. Glancing at the ten men, he flashed them a bright smile. “Sorry to trouble you guys.”

These men pocketed the gold coins and then shouted, “For the quest!” This garnered them plenty of curses from the surrounding players.

“There are two methods when minesweeping. The first one is just like what was done to Deep Waters before; we’ll tie a rope around you, toss you out, and haul you back to clear out all the traps along your way back. The second method is to treat you guys like mops; we’ll push onward with you guys in front and reinforce you from behind. You guys can choose which method you prefer!”

When the ten men heard this, all of them felt that the second method was less degrading as they would not have to be tossed out. They would also be safer as they would be closer to their comrades, so they quickly chose it. “We’ll be mops!”

Chapter 329 - Encircle and Charge!

Not many things were needed to create the mops, so after selecting the appropriate ‘materials’, plenty of players expressed their interest over the mop creation; some wanted to have a hand in it, while others merely wanted to watch.

Disregarding the human portion that was the mophead, sticks, ropes, and similar things were indispensable for this. Since they were deep inside the jungle, the players had no lack of sticks suitable for tying up the ‘mops’.

Gu Fei supplied them with three coils of rope for this operation. This caused many players to feel puzzled. Why was this man carrying so many ropes? The rope he had used before was still hanging limply on a tree. There was also that rope he had used to tie up Deep Waters. Adding the three he had just given away... This peak expert sure was quite the character!

While outsiders could only speculate about this, those who were acquainted with Gu Fei could directly ask him about it. As such, Royal God Call unhesitatingly asked him about the matter.

“The inventory system games provide sure is convenient.” Gu Fei sighed. “It’s so handy to store things, such as weapons, in the dimensional pocket unlike in reality.”

“Weapons?! You considered that a weapon?!” Royal God Call exclaimed.

“Of course.”

“Does that mean there are other weapons inside your dimensional pocket?” Royal God Call’s gaze was on Gu Fei’s dimensional pocket when he asked this.

“Yes, but most of them are not very handy,” Gu Fei said and took out a few for Royal God Call to see. Royal God Call had already seen Sacred Flames of Baptism many times before, including a similar-

looking saber, which Gu Fei explained was for him to wield in tandem with the Chinese broadsword. There were a few small daggers, presumably for throwing, and a white-tier, larger dagger that Gu Fei got from the Werewolves. In addition, there was a slim, long wooden rod. Gu Fei held it perpendicular to the ground before his eyes as he explained to Royal God Call, “Look. This one is called a Qimei staff because its length is leveled with the user’s eyebrows.”

Before Gu Fei could pull out another weapon, Royal God Call cried out, “It’s sais! F*ck me! Twin sabers, sais, staff... I didn’t know you’re actually a Ninja Turtle!”

Gu Fei was not amused, yet he patiently explained, “It’s an iron ruler, actually. It only came to be known as ‘sais’ after its use became widespread in Japan. Karate practitioners often use this.”

“Are the Ninja Turtles trained in karate, then?” Royal God Call mumbled to himself.

Gu Fei tried to recollect his memories. “Hmm... They do seem to know a bit.”

“Let me see that.” Royal God Call reached his hand out. Although Gu Fei had called it an iron ruler, Royal God Call was certain no such equipment existed in Parallel World. The wooden rod Gu Fei had shown him looked to be self-made, yet this sais was obviously made of metal, so other than someone with the appropriate crafting profession, he could not think of anyone who could make it.

When Royal God Call finally got his hand on the weapon, he was brought into tears by what he saw on its description window. This so-called ‘iron ruler’ was actually a quest item called ‘Uncle Mori’s Lost Sais’.

“This belongs to a NPC! Are you not doing this quest since you have yet to return this to Uncle Mori?” Royal God Call inquired.

“I only took that quest to get this iron ruler!” Gu Fei said, regretfully adding, “Too bad I only got this one. I can make a pair if I find another one.”

“Just find a kind soul to do the quest and get another when we get back to Yunduan City,” Royal God Call said before leaning forward. “What else do you have in there?”

Gu Fei was about to pull out another item when War Without Wounds jogged over. “Hey! What are you guys still doing here? The mopping is about to begin.”

“Ohh!” Royal God Call rushed off. Evidently, his interest in seeing people being used as mops was far greater than looking at Gu Fei’s remaining items. Gu Fei shook his head regretfully; the decline in the interest toward kung fu was not without reason, after all, and Royal God Call was a prime example of this, with him choosing to check out the living mops instead of continuing to discuss kung fu with Gu Fei.

“Aren’t you going? I got myself a good spot in the front row!” War Without Wounds invited.

“Let’s go, then!” Gu Fei could only keep his precious weapons as he joined War Without Wounds to watch the minesweeping.

With an audience numbering a thousand and only ten performers, there were bound to be some who would pout in disappointment for being unable to watch the show. Among those were the players who had unfortunately been tasked by Youthful Reflection to be on the lookout for any potential enemy movement.

A majority of the players were crammed together in one spot, which proved just how important War Without Wounds’ ‘good spot in the front row’ was.

Ten men lay on the ground, as the chosen mop-maker, who held a rope in his left hand and a stick forming the rod in his right

hand, smiled brightly like never before. A bunch of gambling aficionados had already finished calling their bets. They were all betting on which of the mops would be completed first. From here on, the gamblers who had placed their bets were not permitted to speak with the mop-maker to ward off cheating. Gambling was a very serious matter, after all.

Everyone began yelling when Youthful Reflection gave the order to begin. This was the single most exciting moment the Yunduan City's players had had since entering the jungle, so their cheers and laughter resounded endlessly. Meanwhile, Deep Waters' comrades hiding in the jungle were utterly flummoxed over the enemies' sudden elation.

"Should we strike again?" They planned their ambushes to have long intervals in between. While they might cause greater damage by attacking often, their constant exposure could potentially reveal to the enemies the flaw in their plan. Deep Waters' men were skilled at such fights and knew very well that a war of attrition that slowly chipped away the enemies' number was their surest path to victory. However, their enemies' sudden excitement caused them to feel uneasy as it seemed to suggest that something was afoot.

Soon, disagreement abounded within their ranks. Some felt that such a time was when they needed to maintain vigilance and not act rashly, as doing otherwise could result in dire consequences. Others believed that the enemies located in the outer circle were starting to get restless, which meant that this was the best time to send forth another wave of assault!

As both sides continued to disagree over their course of action, another burst of cheers resounded on the side of the Yunduan City's players with the birth of their ten-human mops.

"We are breaking through in the northwest direction! Archer formation, prepare to provide cover! Hunters and Thieves, bring up the rear!" While everyone was clamoring over the mop-making

process, Youthful Reflection was making the necessary preparations to make their break through a success. Naturally, Berserkers with high Strength were required to operate the mops. As the primary leader of the expedition, Oathless Sword had no issue getting a spot and becoming in charge of the mopping team.

War Without Wounds, who was considered as a supreme Warrior in many MMOs and had allocated many points to Strength, won himself a spot. He was secretly delighted by this! How many chances could anyone get to do this job?

Besides them, Luo Luo managed to secure June's Rain a position as well. Although June's Rain's equipment might not be extraordinary, finding a Warrior who had devoted all their stats to Strength like her was rare. Furthermore, after borrowing Svelte Dancer's fire-resistant coat, June's Rain gained a clear advantage from others.

A new quest always invigorated June's Rain. As the mop she got danced in her hand with merriment and amid the prayers of those who personally knew her, the person acting as a mop did not make a peep. By the time June's Rain finally stopped her movement and everyone took a look, the man was already passed out. Coincidentally, this was the same Priest whom June's Rain had slapped before. Knowing full well of the lady brutish strength, when he learned that she had been assigned as his handler, the man immediately passed out from the anxiety.

The members of the team were very quickly chosen. Oathless Sword would normally say a few words at times like this, but he must be itching to play with the human mop he got as he simply waved his hand and said, "It's finally time for us to make our assault, fellow comrades! Let's go!"

The Yunduan City's players who had been clustered all this while swiftly made a path out. With the Knights blessing the members of the minesweeping team, the ten Warriors pushed forward a mop each! A team of Priests closely followed the minesweepers and

started bestowing steady Heal on them. It was imperative to preserve the lives of all the human mops.

Following them was the archer formation that Youthful Reflection personally led. Sharpshooters had their Eagle Eye peeled, so even the rustling of leaves ahead could not escape their sight. As for the Mages, they were in charge of guarding their flanks. Behind them were all the unassigned job classes. These players who were not assigned any particular roles in this assault would be the main force once the fighting began.

Taking up the rear was naturally a portion of the Thieves and the leftover Hunters. Sakurazaka Moony had his comrades set up traps in their wake in hopes of letting the enemies have a taste of their medicine. Finally, there were the majority of Thieves in Stealth. Once the enemies rushed out to attack, they would be in for quite an unpleasant surprise.

Gu Fei and Sword Demon were in this last group. Sword Demon was undoubtedly a true Thief. And owing to Gu Fei's lethality, Youthful Reflection felt he would be most impactful bringing up the rear.

The effect these human mops had was very significant. The sound of the traps triggering seemed to come together to create a beautiful melody. Those from Linyin City were not prepared to deal with such an outrageous method that those from Yunduan City had come up with and were unable to come up with any means to stop them. When the mopping team cleared out all the traps, the players following them unleashed their attacks without discretion. The Mages generously cast AOE spells to their flanks, not caring whether there were players visible or not, since they were counting on the possibility of enemy Thieves in Stealth, Mages, and Hunters being in their immediate vicinity.

The players from Linyin City were left rattled in the face of this sudden and massive assault, scrambling for their lives now that the flaw of their setup was exposed here; since they were inferior in

number for this fight, the encirclement they did only dispersed them even further.

Once the web of traps failed to hold the players of Yunduan City in, they no longer had any means to stop or prevent them from blitzing through their ranks.

Chapter 330 - Whitestone Dust in the Jungle

The assault staged by Yunduan City's players caught Linyin City's players by surprise. Moreover, their human minesweeping method was something that Linyin City's players had not expected in the least. Right now, besides them being scattered all over the jungle, another weakness of theirs was revealed: Deep Waters was not with them.

It was not long since Deep Waters' death had sent him to the city's spawn point, so he had yet to make it back to their location. While players could still continue giving directives in MMOs without them being physically present in the location of the fighting, it would be difficult for said players to keep up with any sudden, unexpected changes on the battlefield. Too much time would be wasted just to update the commanders of their situations, discuss possible solutions, and receive their directives.

As such, in the time it took for Linyin City's players to relay the situation over to Deep Waters, the thirty-meter worth of traps that they had set up were handily swept away by the mopping team! There were not actually that many traps buried on the ground as what Yunduan City's players had initially presumed. In any case, their density was definitely at a different level from the thirty meters of traps Deep Waters was dragged through. It seemed that the traps the enemies had prepared alternated between loosely distributed and tightly packed in the various spots around Yunduan City's players. Deep Waters had apparently chosen an area where there was a denser cluster of traps to show up earlier, but that choice had backfired rather spectacularly now.

It was not that Linyin City's players had not worked hard on this, either. They were already doing their darnedest to hold them back; unfortunately, it was to no avail. Against the thousand-man army, the Thieves' attempt to harass and hamper their advancement was ineffective. The archer formation of Traversing Four Seas was

truly terrifying as well, and any Linyin City's player that was the slightest bit careless would instantly incur a hail of arrows, even causing some of the Thieves to lose their Stealth when they were collaterally injured. The Yunduan City's Mages even held the upper hand when exchanging AOE spells with the Linyin City's Mages, albeit the former was unaware of this. After all, they were merely bombarding the areas around them with no particular targets in mind as they advanced forward. Only Linyin City's Mages hiding behind the trees knew of their suffering.

The Linyin City's players hid behind the trees and did not dare to move too much for fear of exposing themselves to Traversing Four Seas' archer formation. They looked no different from someone ensnared by the Hunting Trap, yet all they could do was grit their teeth and bear the damage inflicted on them by the cast AOE spells. Surviving through the spells was not impossible, but death was a certainty if they were to face that storm of arrows directly.

Despite this, the mopping team from Yunduan City still had a casualty. But since this person was someone who had been handling the mop, someone else readily stepped in place upon the man's death. One of the players acting as mops failed to hold after becoming loose during the mopping process, but this did not have much of an impact in the big picture of the battle, as the players at the forefront had already broken through the trap encirclement.

Although they had successfully broke through, the Mages did not stop their assault and merely continued to indiscriminately toss spells around them to provide cover fire for the players who had yet to successfully make their way out. Meanwhile, Youthful Reflection sent forth a command, and the Thieves he had previously prepared went into Stealth mode and dispersed themselves all over. Youthful Reflection had made this arrangement to prevent the enemies from setting up traps anew and entrapping them within a fresh web of traps. With these scattered Thieves and other well-placed lookouts silently observing

the area, they should be able to notice any enemy movement.

Although the traps on their path had all been triggered, Yunduan City's players remained apprehensive on doing battle within the jungle. None of them was in a hurry to exact vengeance on their enemies, either, as they were unsure if they held any sort of advantage. As such, once all of them broke through the enemies' entrapment, the battalion merely resumed its forward advance with flustered appearances.

The players from Linyin City were actually feeling a lot worse than them. Even Deep Waters heaved a deep sigh when he heard that their initial plan to 'seal and siege' their enemies had failed. It was really not surprising for those players from Yunduan City to survive their assault if they could even bear to employ such a cheap and crude method like the human minesweeping. After all, was it not said that a man would be invincible if he did not care about his appearance?

"So what do we do now?" Facing Traversing Four Seas' powerful archer formation and Yunduan City Mages' reckless blasting of the area around them, Linyin City's men simply did not dare to clash head-on with them.

"Are they going in the right direction?" Deep Waters asked.

"Yes," someone answered. Before entering the Class 2 map, Oathless Sword had done his due diligence to keep track of the direction that they were heading, so all the expedition had to do was stay in the general direction by advancing forward to reach the city. Just like what was said before, even if they strayed from a straight path, they would still reach the vicinity of the city.

"It won't be easy to entrap them again like what we just did. Get everyone to retreat in small teams, harass them on a small scale, and confirm their route of advancement. Do everything you can to hamper their speed so as to buy time for us to conceal our men along their route ahead," Deep Waters ordered.

“Roger that!” The Linyin City’s players began to move out. What Deep Waters meant by ‘small teams’ was actually teams with ten players each. Once they grouped themselves accordingly, each team moved deeper into the jungle in separate directions from their current location.

“Any opportunity to ambush?” Deep Waters asked.

“It’ll be a lot harder...” There was plenty of hesitation on this end. “Their Mages are still casting AOE spells to check for hidden enemies.”

“They are only checking with spells, so those should not be strong enough to kill. As long as no one makes a sound, they won’t find out we’re there. What I fear, however, is for the enemies to actually not have a clustered formation like what we thought. There are sure to be Thieves dispersed from the main body, so we may be in for some trouble if they discover our ambush beforehand. We must locate and eliminate these potential threats first. Did you bring the stuff?” Deep Waters asked.

“Of course!”

The ‘stuff’ that Deep Waters was talking about was naturally the Whitestone Dust that they had imported from Baishi City. This was a specialty of Baishi City from its unique geographical feature and could easily be found across that region. Not even 1 copper coin was needed to gather it. The game designers themselves might not have thought that it could be used by clever players in such a way to counter Stealth.

The neighboring Linyin City had obviously picked up on this particular method as well, so players from it would often travel to Baishi City to gather pouches of Whitestone Dust. However, since such a trip required over six hours, the Linyin City’s players considered the item to be valuable and would not utilize it unless absolutely necessary.

Now that they were at the crucial stage of their operation, no one

was holding back anything anymore, and the players from various teams each took out a small pouch and tossed it out, as though they were Maoshan Taoists exorcising the area around them of evil spirits.

This one move they did proved to be very effective. Just as Deep Waters had said, some Thieves from Yunduan City had indeed located a few of them and were presently observing their movement. Any Thieves from Baishi City would immediately understand what was happening if they were the ones experiencing this, but since these Thieves from Yunduan City were new to this part, they failed to understand that an anti-Stealth method was being used on them. Quite a handful of them were hit by the scattered dust and were forcefully revealed, with some reacting too slowly to this, remaining unaware that their Stealth had been broken as they stood out in the open in a perfect display of foolish brazenness.

There was nothing much that needed to be said when teams of ten faced only one Thief each. Youthful Reflection quickly received the scattered reports of the Thieves who had been eliminated. “Not good! It seems that the enemies have a way to counter Stealth!”

“No way. There are so many of them that can counter Stealth?” The death count continued to pile up, a clear indication that it was not just one player that could counter Stealth, which blew Oathless Sword’s mind.

Still, his reaction reminded Gu Xiaoshang, who was standing not too far from them, of Baishi City’s Whitestone Dust that her group had encountered earlier.

“Why didn’t you say anything about this earlier?!” Youthful Reflection was angry.

“Nobody asked me.” Gu Xiaoshang shrugged.

“Quickly call them all back!” Oathless Sword said.

“There’s no rush for that.” Youthful Reflection remained composed. “It’s very easy to hide in this jungle. Our men only suffered a loss here because they were thinking that their Stealth was foolproof. I’ll tell them to be careful, but their reconnaissance task continues.”

“Are all the players you sent mercenaries?” Oathless Sword softly murmured to Youthful Reflection. Gu Xiaoshang was still nearby, and he had no intention of letting the woman he was fond of know about this calculated plan of his.

Youthful Reflection nodded his head with the slightest hint of delight. “And none of them asked for additional pay.”

“Ha ha!” Oathless Sword relaxed when he heard this. He had an expression that showed his apathy toward their survival. Waving his hands casually, he said, “Let’s have them continue their surveillance, then.”

“Of course.” Youthful Reflection disseminated this order to the various mercenary group leaders.

“Has anyone tabulated our losses thus far?” Oathless Sword asked Youthful Reflection.

“146 men so far!” Youthful Reflection replied, explaining, “This includes those players that did not turn up from the start and the cowards that backed down in the Oolong Mountain Range. Still, this trip to Linyin City has the most casualties as of date.”

“D*mn! I’ll make that guy pay for what he has done.” Oathless Sword was extremely incensed, and the very thought of Deep Waters ignited a fiery hatred in his belly. “How’s the losses from the mercenary groups?”

“This... I didn’t calculate in detail, but their losses should be about the same as ours,” Youthful Reflection answered. The number of mercenaries was substantially fewer than Traversing Four Seas’ members to begin with. The fact that their losses were

about the same clearly showed just how strong their sense of self-preservation was. This entire conversation had been discussed in hushed tones. Although those mercenaries in the know were aware of the nature of their employment from the very start, it was still not good to mention such matters openly.

While these two's hushed talk was underway, Deep Waters was attempting to get a handle of the situation on his end. Just as Youthful Reflection had said, once the Thieves learned that the enemies had means to counter Stealth, they became more careful with where they hid themselves. It was not easy to be discovered in this dense jungle, after all. Once Deep Waters received the count for the eliminated Thieves, he immediately understood that the enemies began to be more careful with where they hid. He did not have any direct solution to this problem, so he and his comrades could only adopt a casual approach to it and depended on sheer luck to stumble on the enemies.

Still, having played in this jungle of Linyin City since level 0, these local players were accustomed to this type of terrain. The skills that they had employed in this covert warfare clearly showed their experience when compared to the sloppy attempts of those from Yunduan City. Many of the Thieves carefully hiding themselves were still discovered and exterminated by those from Linyin City. Naturally, there were some that managed to get away thanks to their superior movement speed. Nevertheless, Youthful Reflection's expression was looking worse by the moment. It was obvious that the enemies were eliminating their comrade Thieves so as to conceal their movement from them, yet Youthful Reflection could not think of what sort of devious trap the enemies were planning to spring on their expedition.

Chapter 331 - Gold-farming assignment

Youthful Reflection sent out twenty Thieves in that first wave, but Linyin City's small teams managed to eliminate each of them methodically. With only three Thieves left, Youthful Reflection called for the mercenary leaders to send more of their men, but these leaders could clearly tell that their men would only be used as cannon fodders, so they began to shirk responsibility by claiming that all their Thieves were already dead.

Youthful Reflection could see the many mercenary Thieves out and about, yet when he directly ordered them to set out for the task, they would tell him to seek their leaders' permission first, and when he did seek the mercenary leaders, these leaders would lie through their teeth by claiming that all their Thieves were already dead. This was another example of how such unprofessional mercenary groups abused the disharmony that was created by the hastily set-up chain of command. Youthful Reflection heaved a long sigh as he looked to the heavens for guidance. Just as the option of using these trashy mercenary groups was exhausted, a group of highly qualified mercenaries suddenly appeared before him.

However, instead of feeling happy, the sight of these mercenaries voluntarily stepping up to the plate only made Youthful Reflection's heart hurt. These mercenaries were indeed excellent... so much so that they would always mention a fee before lifting even a finger.

Young Master Han came over to Youthful Reflection with a phony smile. "Do you need help from us for something?"

"Your group only has one Thief; what can you hope to accomplish with that?" Youthful Reflection rolled his eyes and scoffed.

"We'll accomplish great things, of course." Young Master Han

chuckled. “Let us go and give those guys a good welcome gift. What do you think?”

“Are you sure you’re all up to it?” Youthful Reflection was skeptical. He did not doubt the skill that Young Master’s Elite possessed, but given their current special circumstance, most people – Youthful Reflection included – would not be so confident that they could engage and beat the Linyin City’s players in guerilla warfare.

“We won’t charge you a dime if we can’t do it, so what do you have to lose?” Young Master Han asked in a persuasive voice.

“What’s the price this time?” Youthful Reflection asked.

“Each enemy we kill will cost you 30 gold coins,” Young Master Han replied.

“How’s that going to work? How will I know how many men you guys kill?” Youthful Reflection asked.

“You can follow us to observe!” Young Master Han invited. “Your eyes are the only thing you need to count the dead; you won’t even need to lift a finger.”

“In that case...” Youthful Reflection was clearly moved by this offer. After some thought, he decided. “Okay. We are in agreement.”

“Wait for us over there. We’ll be arriving soon,” Young Master Han casually pointed to a location as he went to gather the others. Soon, Youthful Reflection saw all the members of Young Master’s Elite walking toward him with abnormal laziness as they discussed the assignment.

“30 gold coins per kill? The average ‘Punishing Pudgy Keith’ quest would be about this price!” Brother Assist said.

‘Punishing Pudgy Keith’ was the codename that Yunduan City’s players would use whenever they were talking about hiring people to PK certain players.

“One for 30 gold coins, so ten is only 300 gold coins. That d*mn twerp let those volunteer mops earn 300 gold coins a pop; he’s clearly discriminating against us!” War Without Wounds said indignantly.

“That’s not true,” Royal God Call refuted, saying, “Those guys mopped their way to stardom, so it only makes sense to pay such stars a high appearance fee.”

“Ha ha ha ha!” All of them laughed heartily. Only Sword Demon had the attitude of someone who was about to perform an important assignment. Meanwhile, Gu Fei was rather glum. Muttering to himself for a bit, he then raised his head and asked, “Just when will we be able to log off today?”

“Why are you always thinking of logging off?! What a deadbeat!” The person chiding Gu Fei was Svelte Dancer.

“This is a huge transaction; it’s rare to get opportunities like this my friend, Miles. You shouldn’t look so listless! But then again, that’s a good thing for us.” The person who had said this was Drifting. Standing on his either side were Left Hand of Love and Right Hand of Cool.

“G*dd*mn! This is a real fight here boys; we’re not trying to chase skirts. You lot better pull your socks up!” The player lecturing a bunch of unruly men, who were all scoffing at his words, was none other than Sakurazaka Moony.

“You all are...” Youthful Reflection was shocked speechless.

“Oh, I went back and casually asked around. Didn’t expect many people to show interest in this gold-farming assignment, so I brought everyone along,” Young Master Han explained. Besides the above-mentioned mercenaries, there were a few other players who had come along.

Gold-farming assignment... Youthful Reflection was in a daze now. He felt as though he had unknowingly stumbled into a trap as

he gazed at this bunch of players whom he had a hard time convincing moments ago but was now positively brimming with liveliness and could vaguely hear his heart shattering into pieces.

“Oh, yeah. If you want to count our kills, I’m afraid you alone won’t be enough. Best to call a few more men to help you keep an eye on us!” Young Master Han reminded Youthful Reflection with fake kindness.

“Yes. It’s best to send a Priest with me,” Drifting added. It was clear that these people had already been briefed about their current assignment.

“Give us some pretty ladies!” Sakurazaka Moony’s brothers yelled.

“Why would this lady cheat you over such paltry sum of gold?” Svelte Dancer glared. It was evident that she wanted to do this assignment alone and did not wish for anyone tagging along as she did her work.

“Give us an Archer over here!”

“We would like a Priest, please.”

“We want a Priest, too! Make sure she’s a woman....”

Their demands were nonstop. Youthful Reflection had tears in his eyes. Still, it was necessary for him to have these men supervised as, given their lack of professionalism, some of them might come to him later claiming to have single-handedly killed off the entire guild of enemies.

After their supervisors were assigned, these players roared, “Onward to prosperity!” Diving deeper into the jungle in various directions, the expression on Youthful Reflection’s face right now was as wooden as a tree bark.

From here on, a battle exploded into action in the southwest direction. All they heard were a few urgent yells that instantly ended, as though both parties had quickly transited into an

insidious game of hide-and-seek – yelling loudly in such fights was plain suicide. The tranquility of the forest remained, and beyond the occasional sound of the clashing weapons or bursts of flames, the fight raged on practically soundlessly.

Such a scene was extremely strange. All of them knew that countless fights were happening around them, but none of them heard the sounds that usually accompanied such clashes. Could it be that the fights among the Linyin City's players themselves would usually proceed as quietly as these current fights, too?

The only mercenary group doing things in a grand fashion was Young Master's Elite.

The six men swaggered into the jungle in all their arrogance and made quite the din; they even found the time to ridicule and tease Youthful Reflection every now and then as he accompanied them.

Youthful Reflection was having conflicting thoughts right now. On the one hand he really wished for a vicious ambush to spring on these six men and burn them into crisp, on the other hand he did not want that to happen as he was currently with them and their deaths would basically mean his death as well. Just as he was agonizing over this, Gu Fei yelled, “We've got company!”

With that declaration, he turned to a certain direction, cast a spell, and disappeared to that part of the jungle.

There was indeed a player hiding behind a tree. Having just peeked his head out to check the situation, this man did not expect Gu Fei to be able to sense his presence just like that. When he heard Gu Fei yell those words, he did not even consider the possibility of the latter referring to him. Just as he was wondering who among his comrades had gotten exposed, Gu Fei already teleported and materialized diagonally behind him. The poor man was still gingerly huddling behind the tree! Anxious to log off, Gu Fei did not hesitate in his attack – not even taking the time to greet this man shamelessly as he would normally do – and just quickly

sent a sword slash on the man's back.

At the same time, owing to him changing his position, Gu Fei spied two other players hiding behind another tree in his peripheral view. These two men had also spotted Gu Fei, but instead of attacking, they chose to hide! These two retracted their necks into themselves and managed to remove themselves from Gu Fei's direct line of sight.

Having watched the Yunduan City's Mages randomly toss their AOE spells, Gu Fei learned a thing or two from them. He first pointed his sword toward his right and chanted an incantation before doing the same to his left. After casting Descending Wheel of Flames and Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno to either side, he walked out from the tree line.

"How was it?" Sword Demon and the rest asked.

"I'm out of mana," Gu Fei replied.

"We're not asking about that!" Everyone eyed him with disdain.

Before these words left their lips, Gu Fei's delayed spell came alive in two directions behind his back. None of the enemies saw where Gu Fei had tossed the spell, but even if they did see them, they would probably not bother to dodge the spells. This was because the Linyin City's players firmly believed that one spell was not enough to insta-kill anyone. As such, they would usually grit their teeth and bear the hit. This was an acquired habit whenever they were hiding themselves.

Unfortunately for those two players, they were currently up against the indomitable Mage Gu Fei. Since these enemy players had job classes – Thief, Hunter, or Mage – with low HP, not many of them could survive Gu Fei's AOE spell. Gu Fei turned to face Youthful Reflection. "I've got five kills."

"How did you know that?!" Although Youthful Reflection had been standing here all this while, he had not seen a thing. He

thought Gu Fei had only tossed out his spells without seeing anything himself.

“My PK value increased by 5 points,” Gu Fei replied, thinking to himself that Youthful Reflection was really inexperienced for even asking this.

Before Youthful Reflection could reply, Gu Fei rummaged through his pockets and tossed out a dagger in each of his hands to reveal two Thieves when they connected. Sword Demon with Brother Assist and Royal God Call with War Without Wounds paired up and took on a Thief with this pairing. With great precision and skill, these two Thieves were prevented from slinking back in the jungle.

“Here are two more,” Young Master Han announced before those players in front of him could die.

“Do... Do those kills that I don’t witness count?” Youthful Reflection drummed up his courage to ask this question. These mercenaries were doing work for them, so showing too much distrust on them would simply get in the way of things. However, while Youthful Reflection no longer doubted Young Master’s Elite’s ability to complete this assignment, he was rather skeptical on whether these men would hide the truth from him, given their unsavory conduct. Youthful Reflection felt the need to show strictness regarding these things, particularly to this cunning lot. Perhaps, the 5 PK points Gu Fei claimed to have earned were only 2 or 3 PK points in actuality?

Young Master Han bestowed Heal on one of the Thieves with a wave of his hand. He then gestured to the player that they would have a temporary ceasefire.

“How many players did you lose?” Young Master Han asked the Thief.

“Five,” the Thief replied. He evidently felt that hiding such thing was pointless.

Young Master Han shrugged his shoulders as he addressed Youthful Reflection, “There you have it.”

Chapter 332 - A Battle without Sound

This was how Youthful Reflection followed Young Master's Elite's hunt for kills and slowly discovered that their overt engagement was not done without reason. Gu Fei's skill did not simply counter Stealth, and he was always the first to spot enemies attempting to hide or snoop from behind trees. The sneak-attack tactic of Linyin City's players that left others quaking in their boots was rendered ineffectual with the Mage Gu Fei around.

It was simply undeniable how powerful Gu Fei was. There was an instance when four out of their squad of seven accidentally stepped on traps. Just as the enemy team of ten thought that they had gotten the drop on them and leaped out from behind their hiding places to exterminate Young Master's Elite, Gu Fei single-handedly killed seven of them off and caused the remaining three players to flee in panic. Even his friends felt envious over his stunning display of indomitable strength.

"This makes 24 kills for a total of 720 gold coins." Young Master Han smiled sweetly at Youthful Reflection as he said this. He was among those who had stepped into traps, yet his demeanor was as composed as ever.

Indeed, ever since the start of their sweep of the jungle, this team alone killed twenty-four players. The battle itself no longer held any suspense for Youthful Reflection, only ever feeling concerned as to when they would meet new enemies. It was really as though Youthful Reflection were just leisurely playing the classic game of Minesweeper.

Besides Young Master's Elite, the other mercenary groups have their respective fighting styles and kill counts as well.

Drifting's Spell Damage was definitely not below Gu Fei's, and what made him scarier than the latter was how liberal he was with the number of spells he could dish out at once. Once his team

sniffed out the enemies' position, two AOE spells would begin their interaction, eliminating half of their enemies. The bizarre Icy Mirage that followed frustrated the opponents to no end, as fighting those false images wasted precious time that they really could not afford, given that that was all it took for Drifting's spell cooldown to finish. As for those lucky fools that managed to target his real body, one Blossoming Crimson Lotus was all it took to give them a quicker death than those confused by Drifting's copies. The occasional, unexpected situations that cropped up were easily handled by his two long-time companions, Left Hand of Love and Right Hand of Cool. This allowed them to quickly end every fight they got into. In the time it took Young Master's Elite to exterminate twenty-four players, this three-man team also managed to eliminate seventeen players.

Among those conducting this 'gold farming' assignment, Svelte Dancer was probably the only other person who had achieved a spectacular result.

Although Svelte Dancer had to take special care not to fall victim to the traps, her topnotch equipment made it so that she could ignore any types of sneak attacks, be they the Thieves' stabs or the Mages' spells. Leveraging on this, she turned it into a method to lure out her opponents before effortlessly dispatching them. However, her worry of getting ensnared restricted her from roaming about in her top speed, which subsequently reduced her efficiency by a lot since it was possibly one of her biggest advantages as the apex Rogue. So far, she had killed seven players. Nonetheless, given that this was earned while working alone, besides Gu Fei, it was quite impossible to find another solo player who could be this successful in this assignment.

The others were not as outstanding as those three mentioned above. Although the average experts were able to eke out a victory against their enemies, most of them were no match for their Linyin City's counterparts here in the jungle and were sent

respawning to a city with every clash. Naturally, those from Traversing Four Seas that were there to report the kills also got dragged to death with them. These players must be feeling remorseful for placing their greed above their survival, but it was already too late for that now that they were back in their respective spawn points.

The most outlandish result actually came from Sakurazaka Moony and his men. This lot of skeevy men thought of fighting their enemies using the same method of setting up an area of traps for Linyin City's players to step on. It was unknown whether they had terrible luck or something, but not one enemy stumbled on their laid traps. After an indefinite amount of time, these Hunters, who had almost become one with nature with the way they plastered themselves to the trees, finally heard the sound of rustling of bush – the known signal for the arrival of players. All of them held their breaths as they excitedly watched a player foolishly walk into their area of traps. The clanking of a trap being sprung signified that their prey had fallen victim to it.

“We’ve finally got one!” All of them cheered as they rushed out to surround the man. Bows with nocked arrows were raised, spells were readied, and even staves were brandished rather menacingly. The player, who had stumbled on the trap, was so frightened that tears almost leaked out of his eyes as he squealed, “Who are you people?!”

This was a rather strange question. Two parties were currently embroiled in battle, so why would someone from one side ask those from the other side who they were? Sakurazaka Moony suspiciously appraised this player’s equipment and his heart shook from what he found out. After a short pause, he asked, “Who are you?”

“I - I’m just passing by; what are you guys doing?! I’m just a newbie, so I don’t have any equipment or coin. PLEASE DON’T KILL ME!” The man was flustered.

“Newbie?” Everyone appraised this man and discovered that he was indeed what he had said – a newbie at level 12. They were all speechless.

“The trap will automatically disappear when its duration ends,” Sakurazaka Moony said glumly as he waved his hand offhandedly. Everyone exchanged glances.

Fireball suddenly slapped his thigh. “D*mm*t! The main body of our expedition is advancing onward, so our enemies are naturally closely following behind them. Since we’re so far behind, these traps we’ve laid won’t even catch the enemies’ farts!”

Sakurazaka Moony thought that his words made a lot of sense and felt somewhat embarrassed for not realizing this sooner. His embarrassment was not due to him and his brothers wasting time on this fruitless endeavor but due to Vast Lushness lying in the dirt with them this whole time for nothing. Feeling pained at this, Sakurazaka Moony quickly owned up. “Seems I’ve made a mistake with this fighting strategy.”

Vast Lushness merely chuckled at this. “We’re actually not in a bad spot! We have essentially evaded the enemies’ surveillance, giving us the freedom to find Linyin City. Once we locate the city, we just have to inform the others of its exact coordinates. Using our intel, they’ll be able to map out the quickest route toward the city and extricate themselves from the enemies’ traps and ambushes.”

All of them thought that this was a great idea, and just as they were about to head off, Vast Lushness once more demonstrated her high level of intelligence by approaching the newbie, whom they had mistakenly ensnared, and asking, “Brother, which direction should we go to reach Linyin City?”

This question was akin to the break of the clouds that revealed the clear skies beyond. Given the type of terrain Linyin City had, even the locals could not just rely on the cardinal directions to

know which route they should take or where the city gates lay once they entered the jungle; they needed actual coordinates to find their way around. This was especially true for the newbies, and to prevent themselves from getting lost, many would note down the city's coordinates. This man took out his booklet and showed it to Vast Lushness.

"Just how many gates does your city have?!" All these men surrounding the pair exclaimed when they saw a whole page worth of coordinates in the man's booklet.

"Linyin City is different from most in-game cities. You'll understand when you get there," the newbie replied.

"Thank you very much. Let me just copy all these down." Vast Lushness took out her booklet and jotted down all the listed coordinates. By the time she was done, the trap that the newbie had stepped on deactivated.

"Sorry for all the trouble!" Receiving his booklet, the newbie left while feeling puzzled.

"Alright. According to these coordinates, the nearest route to the city... should be this way." Vast Lushness clutched on to her booklet and led the way.

"Be wary of traps!" Sakurazaka Moony expressed his concern. Darting right in front of her, he began to sweep around the ground for traps.

"We should inform the rest, then!" someone suggested.

"Don't." Vast Lushness shook her head. "We'll take a look first before informing them."

"Why?"

"The enemies are keeping an eye on our expedition's heading direction and movement. They don't know about the existence of our team; if we manage to get to Linyin City first, we can find out whether the enemies have laid other traps and inform the others

about those,” Vast Lushness explained.

“That makes a lot of sense.” The rest nodded their heads in agreement. Shortly after this conversation, they proceeded to head toward the indicated coordinates for the city.

At the same time that this was happening, Deep Waters received reports about Yunduan City’s small teams retaliating to their ambush teams. In the big picture, Yunduan City’s players were actually the ones suffering greater losses. Although three routes were efficiently cleared off by Young Master’s Elite, Drifting and his two companions, and Svelte Dancer, it was evident that absolute dominance could not make up for the advantage that Linyin City’s players held in this forest battle. Still, Deep Waters had no plans to entangle with those top experts, so he ordered everyone to note the unique methods that these three teams employed and to disengage and flee at the first sign of their presence.

After Young Master’s Elite eliminated twenty-four players, they only managed to grab two more enemies, bringing their total kill count to 26. They did not meet any enemies after, and the last two that they had caught were actually alone. Not one comrade came out to assist either of those two, which was drastically different from their previous encounters with the enemies. Because of this, they realized that the enemies were intentionally avoiding them.

“Looks like that’s our final kill count!” They helplessly reported this to Youthful Reflection, indicating their readiness to end the foray.

Youthful Reflection had an ugly expression on his face. Every man Gu Fei and the others killed caused his eyelids to twitch, but what made it worse was the losses they had sustained outside of the three teams. Although Youthful Reflection did not care for these mercenaries’ survival, he was still very perturbed over their huge losses.

After handling the Yunduan City's players that were impeding their harassment, the ten-man teams of Linyin City managed to rendezvous with their other members and to begin their relentless harassment of the enemies.

A little spell here, an arrow there, a trap below, or a Thief appearing behind the advancing army... There were plenty of variations to how they harassed Yunduan City's players. While those were not enough to kill the players outright, it nevertheless tested their endurance.

Some players even lost their cool and broke off from the main body to chase after their attackers. If many dove to retaliate, they would not find a trace of the Linyin City's players; if few went, the Yunduan City's players would find themselves disappearing without a trace.

While the archer formation's fearsomeness remained, it simply could not put up with the enemies' ability to harass them from every angle. After all, the number of Archers needed to reach a certain threshold before they could be powerful. Too few and the arrows would be no more than a smattering of disorganized projectiles, which was no different from the arrows of the average Archers.

Oathless Sword was on the verge of a mental breakdown. If he were to ignore the enemies' harassment, the enemies would most likely gather their force and push in a single, powerful wave. If he minded their harassment, the Yunduan City's force would most likely scatter and lose themselves in this dense jungle.

The two sides went back and forth a few more rounds. Neither side had a significant lead when it came to the losses, but Linyin City's players held the upper hand in this situation, and they were currently more mentally assured as well. Linyin City's players had actually achieved their goal of slowing Yunduan City players' progress through this jungle, so their side was technically victorious in this extended skirmish.

All of Yunduan City's players shared the same miserable feeling. If possible, they would surely raze this entire jungle to the ground. This was when Young Master's Elite, Drifting, and every surviving mercenary came strolling back to the battalion. Not one of them showed concern about their current predicament, and the first thing they did on their return was to accost Oathless Sword for their payment.

"26 kills; 780 gold coins," Young Master Han reported.

"18 deaths; 540 gold coins, please," Drifting reported his result as well.

"I've got 9 players, so that's 270 gold coins," was Svelte Dancer's tally.

The lucky survivors also reported 1 to 3 kills, shamelessly asking for their earnings. Oathless Sword could no longer hold it in and he sternly denounced them, "Gentlemen and ladies, please. We're in a critical situation right now. Can't we all just set aside petty profits and focus on coming together to tide over this hardship?"

"What do you mean hardship? This is nothing but a minor speed bump on the road. Block any incoming troops, and buttress any flowing water; don't you know what that saying means?" Young Master Han asked.

A Chinese idiom emphasizing on the importance of adopting a flexible approach to resolve a given problem at certain circumstance or event.

Chapter 333 - Entrapment

“This continuous harassment isn’t particularly damaging. The goal of the enemy is to delay our progress to Linyin City. Seeing how they are looking to stall for time means there is sure to be another setup ahead,” Youthful Reflection said with a blackened face.

“Do you have any idea what’s awaiting us?” Young Master Han chuckled.

“It must be a sort of ambush.” Youthful Reflection’s gaze was distant.

“So you’ve managed to guess it? Then, can you tell if anyone else will carry onward upon knowing that there’s an ambush waiting ahead?” Young Master Han sarcastically asked.

“No matter which way we go, the enemies are sure to have a good grasp of our movement,” Youthful Reflection angrily commented. He recalled that he had hired Young Master’s Elite moments ago precisely to eliminate all the enemies around them. In the end, he ended up wasting all that money for nothing, as these mercenaries made profit, yet their situation remained the same.

“If they could lay an ambush just by knowing our heading direction, why would they need to stall for time?” Young Master Han laughed.

Youthful Reflection was stunned for a moment and could not think of a reply for this.

“So it can be seen that no matter what plan they have in mind, they need time to set it up. I’m pretty sure they’ll be caught off guard if we are to suddenly change our heading direction,” Young Master Han opined.

“That’s easy for you to say. How will we find our way to Linyin City if we are to change our direction like what you are

suggesting?" Oathless Sword asked.

"Why would that be a problem? Look—"

"Someone actually found the city!" Young Master Han's words were interrupted by Youthful Reflection. "Moony – that rascal Sakurazaka Moony actually found Linyin City!"

"Found the city? Where? How did they find it?" Oathless Sword was injected with life when he heard this. This was quite possibly the only news worth being happy about this whole night.

"He said that there are plenty of entrances to Linyin City and to just walk at random..." Youthful Reflection replied.

"What does that mean?" Everyone was perplexed.

The meaning behind that statement was only understood by Sakurazaka Moony and his gang once they arrived in Linyin City. Squirreled deep within the nestling woods, Linyin City was very different from the other in-game cities like Yunduan City, Yueye City, and Baishi City. While the three cities were surrounded by tall walls, with four major gates in the respective cardinal directions of the city, Linyin City was essentially part of the jungle. The city was surrounded by trees that reached for the sky, and its streets were right next to the jungle. The coordinates that Vast Lushness had gotten from that newbie player seemed to be the coordinates for the entrance to every street in the city.

Players could easily enter such a city as long as they got near it. It was really unlike Yunduan and the other cities where entry was only possible through their four main gates.

Sakurazaka Moony informed Youthful Reflection of the good news only after they had ascertained the situation.

"That's great. We're not too far from there." Sakurazaka Moony gave them the closest route after they found Youthful Reflection's coordinates. The gloominess that once hung over Youthful Reflection's face had been swept clean, happily announcing to the

players beside him.

“We’re heading this way!” Youthful Reflection pointed to a new direction for them to go. As Youthful Reflection relayed this directive on the party channel for mercenary leaders, Oathless Sword also quickly did the same on the guild channel.

Everyone instantly rallied upon hearing this. The moment that they had been waiting for the entire night was finally here. People spat on the ground, as though they were consecrating it, in their glee of finally being able to leave this accursed forest.

The battalion quickly adjusted the direction that they were going. Comparing the new route to the old route, although the original path the Yunduan City’s players were taking would eventually lead them to Linyin City as well, the new route could get them there faster. Everyone felt excited because of this; they had embarked on this road full of confidence and hope, after all.

“If those guys dare to trouble us when we arrive to the city, we’ll show them what’s what!” someone avowed.

On the party channel for the mercenary leaders, Sakurazaka Moony was not being idle either. He bragged about how his ‘accidental’ capture of a player from Linyin City had been a plan that they intentionally enacted.

The more Young Master Han heard about this, the more he felt that something was amiss. His expression slowly began to morph.

“Is something the matter?” Sword Demon was his long-time gaming partner, so he could easily tell if something did not sit well with the Priest.

“They harassed us to stall for time, indicating that what they’ve set up required time to prepare. And yet, all we have to do is change our heading direction and their ambush will surely fail. I’ve been wondering why their plan has that major flaw, and I can’t help but feel suspicious now that we’ve stumbled on an easy

path toward the city.”

“That makes a lot of sense.” Sword Demon nodded his head in agreement.

“Quickly inform Youthful Reflection about this,” Brother Assist proposed.

“I think it’s a little too late.” Gu Fei suddenly raised his head.

Near a row of houses by the very boundary of Linyin City, Deep Waters was holding a short bow as he leaned against a wall. A man was standing right beside him, and it happened to be that level 12 newbie that Sakurazaka Moony had ‘accidentally’ ensnared.

“Boss Deep Waters, what do you think of this setup?” The newbie was laughing when he asked Deep Waters this.

“Mmm... Not bad!” Deep Waters nodded.

“He he!” The newbie was still chuckling.

Deep Waters looked at him meaningfully before tossing over a money pouch. The newbie caught it in midair and instantly became delighted. “Does Boss Deep Waters have anything else you need taken care of?”

“Ha ha! It’s best if we wait till you get to level 30!” Deep Waters chuckled.

Sheepishly scratching his head, that man bid him goodbye and ran off. At the same time, several players suddenly came running from a side street, made a beeline for Deep Waters, and asked, “How is it?” These men were responsible for monitoring Traversing Four Seas and the other players from Yunduan City. They all rushed over once they respawned in the city.

“It’s all going according to plan,” Deep Waters told them.

“Will they fall for it?”

“Of course. Even if anyone figures it out in time, it’s still too late for them.” Deep Waters revealed a victorious smile when he said

this.

“How do you want us to deal with those players waiting for their comrades’ arrival over by the edge of the jungle?” These people were referring to Sakurazaka Moony and his gang.

“He he... Forget about them. They’ve contributed enough.” Deep Waters continued to chuckle.

“It’s time!” Someone beside Deep Waters perked up.

“Yes!” Deep Waters affirmed as he looked toward the jungle. He and his men might be unable to see any sort of movement in the jungle from their current position, but Deep Waters was very clear where the clash would occur. As for the result....

In the jungle, the moment Gu Fei spoke while looking up, Young Master Han understood what they had walked into. Brother Assist promptly yelled at the top of his lungs to alert those around him, “There are assailants up in the trees! Be careful!”

This shout alerted not only Yunduan City’s players, but also Linyin City’s players that were hiding up the trees. They were holding back from attacking because their targets had yet to enter the ideal kill zone that they had designated; unexpectedly, the Yunduan City’s players discovered them a bit earlier. Since Brother Assist’s shout already alerted the others of their presence, they decided to take it as a signal for them to attack.

This was a land-versus-air battle. Although everyone had cheerfully embarked on this route, Youthful Reflection had not let his guard down even once. He had been taking command of Traversing Four Seas’ archer formation all this time as they advanced forward. When these Archers heard Brother Assist’s yell, they nocked their arrows and aimed them toward the treetops before Youthful Reflection could order them to do so.

Unfortunately, the overgrown foliage that hung above them made it difficult to spot any humans despite being warned of their

presence.

They did not have the time to carefully search for their enemies on the treetops as Youthful Reflection immediately ordered them to fire. Almost at the same time, spells and arrows flew toward them from the treetops.

The barrage of arrows from Traversing Four Seas' archer formation was like a blind cat's attempt to catch a mouse. While their arrows were unable to clip and even shoot many of their ambushers, their enemies were able to take down many of Yunduan City's players.

This was a location that Linyin City's players had chosen to launch their attacks. Taking the high ground and mounting a three-dimensional offensive, numerous Mages' spells stacked together and heavily bombarded the target areas. Those unlucky enough to find themselves in the said areas would meet their certain demise without suspense.

Countless Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno burned and blazed together, blanketing the target areas with fire that left none alive.

The six men of Young Master's Elite watched in horror the split-second change unfold before them. Their habit of hanging at the army's rear had saved their lives, as their group was well outside the enemies' designated kill zone. Three meters in front of them, the raging firestorm swallowed many Yunduan City's players and burned them to ashes. Dread crept up to these six experts as they bore witness to this massacre. With such a wide AOE, not even Gu Fei's Blink would allow him to escape the area of flames before them.

“DISPERSE! EVERYONE, QUICKLY DISPERSE!” Oathless Sword had a vicious look on his face as he roared this order. He had been leading the troops from the very front, so he had fortunately been standing on the fringe of the kill zone. Just like Young Master's Elite, he successfully escaped the bombardment with his life intact.

Unfortunately, a good half of the elite archer formation that Traversing Four Seas was proud of had been caught in the blast radius. This tragedy's only saving grace was Prisoner Todd not losing his life due to him being outside the kill zone. As such, Traversing Four Seas did not fail their guild quest just yet.

“Youthful Reflection, are you dead? Gale Force?” Oathless Sword continued to command the scattered crowd as he searched for his left-and right-hand men.

Gale Force quickly answered his call, but Youthful Reflection’s reply was actually in the form of a message.

“F*CK!” This was only one curse word, yet anyone could feel the bitterness and tears contained in it. Youthful Reflection was quite possibly the one that had worked the hardest throughout this expedition. It was a pity that he no longer had the chance to taste the sweet fruit of victory. What a huge misfortune this was!

Even sadder was that Oathless Sword did not have the time to comfort Youthful Reflection. He hurriedly closed the message when he heard Gale Force let out a ferocious roar as the latter tossed a Thief high in the sky.

“Be careful! Enemy Thieves are among us!” Gale Force yelled.

Oathless Sword’s state of mind congealed as he charged toward Todd’s side, making eye contact with the three Guardians that Silver Moon had left behind. These three men had been charged with the protection of Todd the entire journey thus far, so they were already aware just what they were supposed to do in such situations. Without a moment of hesitation, the three men formed a triangular defense around Todd. Oathless Sword had a sword in his right hand and a saber in his other. Whirling the two blades about, he was hoping to strike the Thieves in Stealth.

“Everyone, beware of Thieves!” Oathless Sword prompted the crowd once more.

On the jungle's outskirt by a certain wall, Deep Waters was contentedly reading a message that gave a brief report about the operation: "The ambush was successful. The target is already in sight."

Chapter 334 - The Tree-shaking Stratagem

The spell bombardment of the enemy Mages had stopped, yet this pause was not due to them running out of mana – even Gu Fei would not be so weak as to run out of mana after casting just two spells – but instead due to them only having two AOE spells in their current arsenal. For them to cast the spells again, they would have to wait for their cooldown to finish. Actually, there was another reason behind the pause in their assault.

The first lethal wave of attacks was actually only done by them to probe the players from Yunduan City. The quest that Deep Waters and his guildmates picked up had the same goal as Yeguang Village's Werewolves: kill the Prisoner Todd. The quest did not care for the number of Yunduan City's players they killed. Both parties had been clashing with each other for so long merely because Deep Waters and his men had not yet found their target's whereabouts within the battalion. At this moment, they finally got a clear view of their target.

Hidden behind the raised shields of the three Guardians and personally being watched over by Traversing Four Seas Guild Leader Oathless Sword, every pair of eyes hidden up the trees could tell that that was their guild quest target.

Following this, Mages turned their staves and Archers aimed their arrows to the NPC.

The target of this second wave of attacks was the real purpose of their ambush!

The setting up of an ideal kill zone by these Linyin City's players was not done to deal the heaviest blow possible toward Yunduan City's players but to ensure that their AOE attacks would encompass the entirety of the enemy battalion. In this way, they could concentrate their firepower at any area within the kill zone once they located their target.

Todd was currently not in the most ideal spot for them, as a good portion of their Mages could not target his location. Nonetheless, they only needed to make sure that the AOE of their spells could reach him. For now, they could only take aim as they waited for their spells' cooldown to finish through gritted teeth.

At the moment, Oathless Sword was slashing a Thief from beneath the canopy of a tree. Just as he was about finish the man, the Thief suddenly disengaged from their fight and turned tail to flee. It was not just this Thief; instead of attacking them, all the handful of Thieves that had appeared around them started retreating.

“Not good!” Oathless Sword quickly realized what was going on.

Without another word, he turned his body sideways and sprinted outward with Double Charge. This was Oathless Sword’s unique skill, which let him use Charge twice before it went into cooldown.

The moment Oathless Sword evaded, flames could be seen up in the sky, burning ever brighter than before. Oathless Sword did not have the time to worry about how many Mages had unleashed their spells on them; all he could do was let out a pain-filled bellow. He was certain that quest would fail now. After all, no matter how powerful the three Guardians were, there was just no way for them to survive the concentrated spell bombardment of so many Mages.

It was just as Oathless Sword had thought.

The Bulwark of Imprisonment of the three Guardians was indeed OP, but that was only reflected in the traits of the equipment. Without using these shields to receive the incoming attacks, the Guardians had no way of demonstrating their impregnable defense. Even if there were only a handful of Mages that had cast their spells together on them, their deaths would still be inevitable. After all, they could only use their shields to defend from a certain direction at a time. Raising their shields might

protect them from the Descending Wheels of Flames rolling down the sky, but they would be exposed to the Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno sprouting from the ground.

Indeed, back then, they had managed to toss their shields to the ground and hop on them to defend themselves from Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno. However, their opponent at that time was Gu Fei. His slow casting speed gave them ample time to accomplish the complex steps necessary to avoid the flames. Unfortunately for them, it was almost impossible to find another Mage that had slow casting speed as him.

Even the sturdy Guardians melted under the intense flames, their abundant HP merely prevented them from being insta-killed, though their death was still inevitable. The agony that could be seen on their faces lasted for a whole two seconds before white lights whisked them away, much to Oathless Sword's dismay.

If even the tough Guardians could be killed like that, how would Prisoner Todd, who was standing in their midst, survive?

Oathless Sword closed his eyes when this was all happening and waited in horror for the system prompt about the quest's failure. However, he was in for another surprise.

The Guardians were no longer there, but the ground continued to burn with intensity. Those from Yunduan City that failed to escape the spells' AOE in time had all been killed off, but Todd, with his unkempt hair and permanently blank eyes, was just standing there.

He's still alive! Oathless Sword was so shocked that his mouth hung agape.

However, he quickly returned to his senses. Hurriedly darting over to Todd's side, he dragged the NPC out of the flames.

It would be troublesome for Oathless Sword if Todd resisted; fortunately, the NPC was very obedient. It was almost as though

the NPC was aware of the predicament he was in, as the prisoner immediately followed when Oathless Sword dragged him away. Oathless Sword waved his arm and yelled to the others, “Cover! Give us cover!”

Half of Traversing Four Seas was still intact, and the Archers and Mages from the mercenary groups were still alive as well. These players were currently seizing this lull in the attacks to randomly toss their own attacks on the treetops. Meanwhile, the Warriors did what they could as well by hugging the nearby trees each and shaking them wildly.

Unexpectedly, that was actually the most effective method of attack.

Given how dense the jungle was, the branches and leaves up the trees were intertwined with one another, so shaking any of them would affect quite a large area. With so many Warriors shaking the trees at the same time, the vigorous rustling of the vegetation and branches filled the entire jungle. Some Linyin City’s players were unprepared for this and fell down from the trees as a result. Some of these falling players reacted quickly and managed to grab a hold of hanging branches on their way down. However, their bodies were now left exposed to Yunduan City’s players. In a matter of seconds, a line of trees had players hanging from their branches like ripe fruits – a truly bizarre sight to behold.

“F*ck! What a mess!” Young Master Han facepalmed. Everyone heard a branch snap and, in the next instant, a Mage fell down in a heap near where Young Master Han stood.

A fiery glow was seen as Gu Fei displayed his ‘pocket unsheathing’ technique and insta-killed the man.

That was not the only thing the shaking of trees was good for. What was great about this method was that those players atop the trees could not initiate their attacks now!

The players hiding within the trees were Archers and Mages, so

while most of them managed to not fall down by hugging the tree trunks, they could also not do anything else. The Archers needed both their hands to fire off arrows, but since they were using them to keep their balance on the treetops, how would they be able to shoot anything?

As for Mages, although they could cast spells with one hand, unless it was a sort of instant-cast spells, they were still required to remain stationary while chanting the spells' incantations. Since the trees were being shaken wildly, they were being shaken along with them and could not stand stably on their feet. Even the slightest shifting of their feet could not escape the system's strict judgment, so not one of them succeeded in chanting spells.

The Yunduan City's players had yet to realize the ingenuity of their actions, but they could tell that the shaking of the trees was helping them in their current plight. Those enemy players that fell from the trees were killed off before they could climb to their feet and those that were hanging on the branches became living targets. The tide of this battle had turned in an unexpected way.

Oathless Sword was also demonstrating the proper qualities that a leader of a large guild should have now. Keeping an eye on Todd standing next to him, he calmly commanded all the remaining players to do whatever they could do – shaking the trees, hitting the targets, or killing off the players that fell down.

Deep Waters, who had been hanging by Linyin City's border, waited for the good news of their victory; instead, he was flummoxed by what was happening. “How many Mages cast their spells together in that assault?”

“At least fifty of them!”

“Fifty Mages and each of them casting two AOE spells, so how is that NPC still alive?!”

“That NPC doesn't even look fazed by our assault.”

“This quest might be harder than I thought...” Deep Waters sighed. He had never once assumed that the NPC would be weak enough to die from the slightest touch; otherwise, protecting such a frail NPC for the quest would just be asking Traversing Four Seas to perform a miracle. In fact, Deep Waters had set up this thorough trap to give his men the chance to quickly concentrate their firepower and eliminate the target once they spotted him. Who would have thought that the concentrated bombardment of fifty Mages would not be enough to blast the NPC to kingdom come, though? It seemed that a conservative estimate of this NPC’s HP might even put him on par with a Boss.

“What’s the current situation? Can we send forth another wave of attacks?” Deep Waters hurriedly asked.

“No!” his men on the other end replied, explaining, “They’ve already begun to shake the trees!”

“They’ve discovered this solution so quickly? Yunduan City sure does live up to its name of being a city where experts congregate like the clouds in the sky!” Deep Waters exclaimed in awe. They were players who had spent most of their days venturing in the jungle, so they already naturally knew of how to counter ambushes coming from the treetops: shake the trees to completely seal off their assailants’ ability to attack. They had employed this tactic precisely to take advantage of the unfamiliarity of Yunduan City’s players to fighting in this type of terrain and to increase the probability of killing all the enemies in one fell swoop. After all, if they had succeeded in bombarding Todd to death, the enemies would have failed their quest. If they were sensible, the enemies would see that the best thing for both parties at that point was to make peace with each other. Would it not be better for everyone to just shake hands, have a meal together, and curse the game designers for creating competitive quests in the first place?

Deep Waters was shocked to learn that not only did their assault fail to finish all the Yunduan City’s players, those people also

managed to quickly grasp the tree-shaking stratagem. Actually, the thinking of Yunduan City's players was pretty simple. Since there were players atop the trees, they needed to shake them down. They did not think that their shaking of the trees would perfectly counter and seal off the two job classes' ability to ambush them.

"Tell the players atop the trees to hold on. The enemies won't dare stay in the jungle for long, so let them leave," Deep Waters commanded.

The players stuck on the trees had actually decided to do this as well, and each of them hugged the trees' trunks and branches as tightly as they could. Besides Yunduan City's Warriors that continued to shake the trees, the rest were dispersing in an orderly fashion according to Oathless Sword's command.

On the edge of the jungle, Sakurazaka Moony and his men, who had been waiting for their comrades' arrival, finally spotted the figures of players making their way toward them.

"What took you so long?!" Sakurazaka Moony happily received them, believing that he had made a great contribution toward their survival.

"G*dd*mn you!" The first player to make it out of the jungle was enraged at the sight of Sakurazaka Moony and he bodily shoved the Hunter, causing the latter to stumble.

A reference to Yunduan City. As I have previously said, the Chinese character for the city means 'cloud region' or 'cloud fringe'.

Chapter 335 - Heavy Losses

Sakurazaka Moony was a deplorable man, but he was no coward. He felt anger well up inside when the man shoved him to the ground without rhyme or reason, and he quickly climbed up to his feet to fight the other man. The man was not planning to let Sakurazaka Moony off, either. Extending his hand to grab him by the collar, the man asked, “Do you know how many of my comrades died thanks to your doing?”

I messed up! Sakurazaka Moony thought to himself. In my anger, I actually forgot about my job class and closed in the gap between me and this man when I should be distancing myself from him! That was really foolish of me! He was occupied with analyzing how to continue the fight, so he failed to register the man’s words. Fortunately, his comrades reacted to this and quickly pulled the two of them apart.

“What happened?” Vast Lushness asked, perplexed. It was apparent that the man’s anger toward Sakurazaka Moony had basis, as almost every Yunduan City’s player was glaring daggers at him.

“Are you in cahoots with that Deep Waters guy?!” someone demanded.

Sakurazaka Moony felt even more incensed at the person’s accusation, so he barked at the man who had shoved him, “Only people without morals would be in cahoots with Deep Waters!”

His voice was a little loud, so those nearby heard him. Deep Waters and a few of his comrades were not far from Sakurazaka Moony and company’s location; all of them were disgruntled when they heard his outburst, indubitably feeling insulted by Sakurazaka Moony’s words.

“What happened?” Vast Lushness asked with knitted brows.

A beautiful lady was truly a fantastical existence that could influence different settings. At times they could act as a catalyst, and at other times they would be akin to an inhibitor. Right now, when Vast Lushness asked this question, the others stopped yelling and explained everything in a calm voice, “We were ambushed on our way over.” With that, these players hatefully glared at Sakurazaka Moony once more.

“What ambush?” Vast Lushness hurriedly asked.

“The enemies were hiding on the treetops on the path here and were waiting for us to pass by. When we arrived on the path, they unleashed AOE spells on the unsuspecting us and those that did not manage to evade in time died,” the player narrated.

“How did this happen...” Sakurazaka Moony trailed off in his shock. He could imagine their side’s staggering losses after suffering such an ambush.

“Shouldn’t we be asking you that?” That person glared at Sakurazaka Moony hatefully, evidently still deeply suspicious of his involvement.

“This has got nothing to do with him,” Vast Lushness defended Sakurazaka Moony, saying, “This was entirely my idea. It looks like the enemies arranged for us to meet that newbie, so that we would fall for their ambush.”

The men looked at Sakurazaka Moony before they turned their gazes on to Vast Lushness. They were momentarily at a loss for words.

“Just what in the world is going on!” someone roared. Another player, who just came out of the jungle, glared at Sakurazaka Moony with rage as he dragged someone along with him, who happened to be the Prisoner Todd. This person was of course Traversing Four Seas Guild Leader Oathless Sword.

“This... This was all the enemies’ ruse...” Sakurazaka Moony did

not know what to say. While this was due to a momentary lapse of judgment, a mistake was still a mistake, and it was even such a major mistake....

“This has got nothing to do with them. It’s my fault. I was the one who got hoodwinked.” Vast Lushness was far composed in comparison.

“And who are you?” Oathless Sword stared at her. Youthful Reflection was in charge of supervising the mercenary groups, so Oathless Sword did not bother to get to know all the different mercenary leaders.

“Is it that important to know who I am? Now is not the time to talk about that. Deep Waters’ men may likely be near us, so it’s best to think of our next move. It’s still not too late for you to find out those accountable for this debacle once all is over,” Vast Lushness calmly answered.

“That’s right!” another person voiced out her agreement. Gu Xiaoshang just happened to walk out of the jungle and hear Vast Lushness’ words. She immediately strode over and gazed at Vast Lushness favorably. “Sister, which mercenary group are you from? I don’t recall seeing you before.”

“Me? I’m not from any mercenary group. I’m just tagging along to play with my friends,” was Vast Lushness’s reply.

“My name’s Gu Xiaoshang. How should I address you?” Gu Xiaoshang extended her hand toward her.

“Vast Lushness.” Both ladies commanded the attention of everyone around them as they shook each other’s hand, causing all the men around them to temporarily be in a daze. At Vast Lushness’s answer, Gu Xiaoshang asked, “Vast Lushness? The one from Yueye City?”

“That’s me.” Vast Lushness nodded her head.

Gu Xiaoshang, Oathless Sword, and the other Yunduan City’s

players exchanged glances. Due to Silver Moon's disappearance, Vast Lushness's version of his despicable history had been mentioned plenty of times, yet Sakurazaka Moony had never once mentioned that she was actually part of his group.

The Vast Lushness in the story had been besmirched and abandoned, so everyone had assumed that she would be a dejected and spiteful woman, yet the person they saw right now was not like that at all. Just her calmness and ability to stay composed in the face of this chaos showed her strength of character.

Before this discussion could continue, more and more players made it out of the jungle. As the gathered people increased, Oathless Sword began organizing them. Finally, a large group of Warriors walked toward them as they shook the trees along their way.

“What are you guys doing?” Oathless Sword was puzzled.

“If we stop shaking the trees, the enemies’ attacks will resume,” one of the Warriors answered.

“Alright, that’s enough. If there’s anyone here, we won’t be able to stand here safely,” Oathless Sword said matter-of-factly.

Upon hearing this, Warriors finally stopped what they were doing. Everyone was feeling a little overwhelmed right now.

“Is everyone out yet?” Oathless Sword asked. Logically speaking, the Warriors should be the last to leave. He had even thought that these men would not survive. After all, once they stopped shaking the trees, there was a high probability of the enemies from up there to bombard them. He really did not expect this lot of players to actually make it out of the enemies’ kill zone by staggering their formation and stopping to keep shaking bit by bit.

“Those men from Young Master’s Elite are behind us. They said they’re gonna be the rearguards,” a Warrior answered.

“Rear guards? Are there enemies around us?” Oathless Sword

grew nervous and he moved to organize the remaining troops to resist the enemies.

“It’s fine; we’ve already taken care of them. It’s just a few enemy Thieves in Stealth.” The six men of Young Master’s Elite appeared in this grand fashion.

“This account won’t be tagged on to your bill!” Young Master Han generously said to Oathless Sword.

Oathless Sword did not have the heart to be so calculative over this matter, so he turned to the remaining troops and shouted, “May each mercenary group do a quick head count of your men. Those from Traversing Four Seas, stand by that wall over there!”

The various mercenary leaders immediately went to work and called for their members to follow them. The members of Traversing Four Seas went to the indicated wall, each of them clearly looking extremely defeated. Besides them, a good number of players appeared very lost. When Oathless Sword went over to ask what the matter was, it turned out that they were the mercenaries whose leaders had lost their lives. Thus, Oathless Sword called Gale Force over to temporarily take charge of this leaderless bunch.

A rough tally of the remaining players began. The number of players that had originally set out from Yunduan City was close to one thousand three hundred. They lost over a hundred players in their battle with the Mountain Bandits of the Oolong Mountain Range; this number included those players who had backed out from crossing the crevasses. The other losses were negligible in the process up until they made it into this jungle. The constant sneak attacks, harassment, and that huge ambush they had just experienced caused them to lose almost six hundred players. This battalion that was originally close to one thousand three hundred in number was now reduced to roughly about six hundred men.

Everyone was despondent. This was because nearly everyone,

except for Young Master's Elite, had lost comrades in the process. This six-man team had not suffered any losses in this expedition so far, and their purses had steadily been getting fatter all this while. All the remaining players had a mournful expression on their faces, so the six men thought it wise not to look too happy themselves.

However, when the six men looked around them, they saw that even the Amethyst Rebirth ladies looked crestfallen. Royal God Call could not hold himself back and asked, "Hey. You girls didn't suffer any losses either, right?" The Amethyst Rebirth ladies had also been hanging around the rear end of the procession when the ambush occurred earlier, so they were fortunately able to avoid that disaster just like Young Master's Elite.

"What are you saying? We've lost plenty of our comrades when we were crossing the Oolong Mountain Range!" One of the ladies rolled her eyes to Royal God Call.

Royal God Call was speechless... The challenge of courage over at the Oolong Mountain Range had indeed caused plenty of Amethyst Rebirth members to back out, which included his beloved Grape. He had originally wanted to make use of this expedition to get closer to her! Fate sure loves to make a fool of us, humans, Royal God Call became morose when he thought of this.

Gu Fei was possibly the most affected among the six men. This heavy atmosphere that had settled finally caused him to blurt out, "Can we log off yet?"

"Will you die if you log off a little later?" Young Master Han rolled his eyes.

"I still have classes to supervise tomorrow morning!" Gu Fei reasoned.

"What utter baloney. I've never heard of this early-morning-exercise thingy before," Young Master Han scoffed. During their first meeting, Gu Fei had told Royal God Call that he was a teacher.

After everyone became more familiar with one another and upon further probing, they learned that Gu Fei was a P.E. teacher.

“There are always morning exercises. Have you never attended school before?” Gu Fei asked.

“I’ve been to school, but I’ve never done the exercises,” Young Master Han casually replied.

The people around them continued to hold this somber silence, not one of them saying a word. They were waiting for Oathless Sword to say a word, yet he was still busy taking charge of matters with his guild. Honestly, he did not really care much about the number of players left from the mercenary groups; what he was more concerned about was the safety of Todd and the number of Traversing Four Seas’ men that they had lost. It was apparent that he was not good at this sort of thing, as he had yet to finish counting all the members of his guild that were standing by the wall even now.

However, a new problem rose before the last one even subsided. Oathless Sword had not even finished counting his guild members when many mercenaries came to him. “Guild Leader Oathless, we’ve decided to withdraw from this mission!”

Chapter 336 - Different Goals

Silence. Dead Silence.

Focus. Everyone's gaze was focused.

The person who had said this was just a nobody from one of the mercenary groups. Oathless Sword had been doing a headcount of his remaining men when he turned his head back to regard the man. He then calmly smiled. "Get your mercenary leader to come and speak to me!"

The man nodded his head. "My mercenary leader sent me to speak on his behalf. Our entire mercenary group agreed to withdraw from this mission."

Only then did Oathless Sword give this matter his attention. Slowly turning to properly face the man, his face oozed with anger. Backing out from the mission at this point in time was akin to adding fuel to the fire. Oathless Sword was almost done counting his guild members, and based on the number he had arrived at thus far, only about four hundred members were alive. This meant that he had lost nearly half of his men throughout this expedition. The losses on the mercenary groups' side were a lot worse, as the originally five hundred mercenaries that had accepted the mission were now down to just about two hundred.

The problem here was that the Traversing Four Seas' members that had lost their lives automatically 'failed' the guild quest when they respawned in Yunduan City. In contrast, the mercenaries' mission would not be marked as 'failed' as long as the Prisoner Todd remained alive. Furthermore, since they could respawn in Baishi City, it would only take them three hours or so to get back to Linyin City. Traversing Four Seas had hired many mercenary groups precisely in preparation for this sort of heavy losses that they might incur during the expedition, yet, at this very moment, these mercenaries actually wished to withdraw from their mission.

Oathless Sword thought that he was not the one being unreasonable here.

However, before he could even speak, three more leaders or representatives from different mercenary groups came forward. “We wish to withdraw from this mission as well.”

“You guys!” Oathless Sword was angered to the point of speechlessness. The tone of these men sounded resolute, as though they were merely informing him of their decision and were not looking to negotiate.

“Isn’t it a little too much to back out at this moment?” Quite a lot of Traversing Four Seas’ players felt dissatisfied with this, and one of them actually stepped out to say this.

In the end, someone from the four mercenaries stepped forward. “You’re right. It’s a little too much. That is why our group has decided to refund the deposit in full.” With that, they saw the man return to his mercenary group and talk with his comrades for a moment. Everybody watched as they dug into their pockets to gather the appropriate amount into a money pouch. Following this, the man came back to Oathless Sword once more and handed over the money pouch to the latter.

When it came down to the deposit, different mercenary groups had different rules for it. Employers who were in a rush to hire mercenaries would often make use of this to lure people into aiding them. Take Traversing Four Seas as an example; almost all the mercenary groups were paid half of their total fees as a deposit upfront and were promised to be given the other half once the mission they had set was accomplished. No conditions were set about recovering the deposit if the mission ended in failure.

Right now, these mercenary groups were actually withdrawing from the mission that they had yet to fail of their volition – something which had never happened before. Oathless Sword felt pissed that he did not set a condition for annulling the contract

like this; he did not reach out to accept the deposit that was being returned by the man. Behind him, Gale Force stepped forward and angrily said, “This is not a matter of coins; aren’t you guys showing a sheer lack of integrity right now?”

The man obviously knew that he was doing something out of the norm, so his head hung low. He looked between Gale Force and Oathless Sword before eventually admitting, “Sorry, but we don’t think we are the right people for this mission.”

“Just admit you got cold feet and decided to back out,” Gale Force taunted. Actually, anyone would assume that fear was the reason anyone would withdraw from this mission after reaching this point.

“Cold feet?” The man revealed his suppressed anger when he heard Gale Force’s ridicule, yet he continued to talk to them in a moderate tone. “We are well aware of where we stand in this mission and know that we’re just going to be used as cannon fodder before we even accepted this mission, so do you really think we would decide to back out due to getting cold feet?”

Gale Force was stunned.

“Guild Leader Oathless, I’m sure you remember what you said to entice us into accepting this mission. Did you honestly think we accepted this mission for the mercenary fee? He he... I’m afraid most of the mercenaries here don’t really have the heart to say this, but this entire expedition will have us travel to five cities. So far, we’ve already been to Yueye, Baishi, and now Linyin – that’s three cities out of the five needed for your guild quest. And by the looks of things, it seems that we are mistaken. There simply aren’t any additional earnings as we have been led to believe. Now that we are even exposing ourselves to something as risky as a competitive quest, our returns are essentially zero. After discussing it among ourselves, we really can’t find any justifiable reason to continue our participation in this mission. Thus, we have decided to withdraw from this. That’s all we’ve got to say for this

matter; we'll leave it to you to think of it however you want!"

After ending his speech and upon seeing that Oathless Sword still did not move to accept the money pouch, the man bent over, placed the money pouch on the ground, and walked off. "We're taking our leave now."

Many players left the crowd with him and returned into the jungle without glancing back even once.

The other three mercenaries, who also wanted to leave, felt that that man had already said everything needed to be said, so they quietly took out their money pouches and placed them on the ground before leading their men away as well.

Oathless Sword was about to say something when, unexpectedly, the men's move spread like the plague through the crowd. In a matter of seconds, five more mercenary groups came forward to leave their money pouches and silently took their leave.

"Hey! All of you—" Gale Force wanted to chase after them in a fit of rage, yet Oathless Sword held him back with a shake of his head. "Forget it; let them go!"

Looking around the crowd, Oathless Sword gravely asked, "Is there anyone else who wishes to leave?"

The other remaining mercenary groups exchanged glances; this included The Black Hand, the largest mercenary group in Yunduan City. Although their mercenary leader, Black Index Finger, died, The Black Hand did not see it fit to withdraw from this mission. As such, Drifting, who was acting as the temporary leader of The Black Hand, humbly stood among the crowd.

The Amethyst ladies did not withdraw, either. Besides Young Master's Elite, they were probably the only ones who did not suffer any casualties. It was quite the miracle considering how weak their mercenary group was.

There were the skeevy men of The Great Hunting, as well. They

did not lose anyone during the confrontation in the jungle, and most of their losses were from that time they had been in Yueye City.

Two ordinary mercenary groups remained besides those already mentioned. Naturally, Young Master's Elite was still around.

Oathless Sword did not really care whether these six mercenary groups remained or not. Instead, his gaze was on the seventh mercenary group that had chosen to stay and he called out in an emotional voice, “Xiaoshang.”

“Ouch...” Royal God Call showed a pained expression as though he had just been poisoned.

“Don’t call me that! It’s disgusting! Address me by my full name, Gu Xiaoshang!” Gu Xiaoshang spat.

“Thank you for staying,” Oathless Sword continued tenderly. Even his guild members could not stand it, and Gale Force coughed up a storm right next to him.

Besides these seven mercenary groups, quite a handful of players remained where they were. These were the players from Silver Moon mercenary group. At the moment, they were essentially a leaderless group. The leaders of other mercenary groups might not be physically present, but they were at least still on the mercenary channel, so the final say with the group was still with them. In the case of these players, although Silver Moon was still their leader in name, all of them no longer bothered with him. His words fell on deaf ears, as everyone in the group discussed this matter animatedly on the mercenary channel. They had yet to come to a decision.

Oathless Sword recognized quite a few of these men, so he walked toward them. “Gentlemen, I’m afraid that the mercenary group you are in is all but dead in name. However, if you guys are willing to continue, the remaining half of the fee will be paid to you all in full when everything is done.”

“You’re handing it over to the five of us?” they asked. Silver Moon mercenary group originally had forty members. What was supposed to be paid out to forty players would be a huge sum if split between the five of them.

Oathless Sword nodded his head. “If any comrades of yours who have lost their lives recently wish to continue, they too can have a share of the payout.”

“That’s great!” the five men readily agreed. They did not hide this from the others. Quickly passing this along to the rest on the mercenary channel, some agreed to return while others refused. This settled the matter with this group of mercenaries.

Oathless Sword swept his gaze over the remaining mercenary groups as emotions welled up inside him. Just as he was about to say something, he saw Gu Fei step out from Young Master's Elite and strode toward him in a resolute manner just like those players who had left.

F*CK ME! Oathless Sword once more felt rage surge within him. He should have expected this gang to kick him while he was down in the gutter by choosing to call it quits at such a crucial moment.

Unexpectedly, Gu Fei’s words were totally not what he had imagined. “Guild Leader Oathless, is there anything else? If not, then can I go and log off?”

“Ah?! Log off?!” Oathless Sword was shocked. He really did not expect Gu Fei to ask something very mundane, so he momentarily failed to register his words. Why would such an expert like this man talk about logging off at this time of the night?

“Yup. It’s getting late.” Gu Fei nodded earnestly, proving just how peculiar he was.

“Oh... Log off, then!” Oathless Sword returned to his senses and swiftly gave his permission. “We still have to store Todd back in the prison. We can all log out once that is done, so let’s get to it!”

They all steeled their nerves to accomplish this task. It was clear that Deep Waters and his men would not give up just because they had managed to escape from the jungle. However, within the city, these players from Yunduan City no longer feared the enemies' assault. Somewhere over six hundred players were left in this army, and they had no lack of experts. If Deep Waters wished to fight with them to the death, they would gladly take them all on and see this matter through to the bitter end.

Adopting such a grim mentality that was willing to face death head on, Yunduan City's players officially stepped inside Linyin City.

The houses in Linyin City were mostly constructed with wood, which only made the city resemble a rustic village of sorts. Besides that, the streets were filled with players doing their businesses. Every local was curious and on guard at the sudden appearance of such a large horde of foreign players, which was no different from how any locals in other cities would react in such a situation.

Brother Assist, who was great at analyzing things, was the first to notice the distinct idiosyncrasy with the local players.

"Have you guys noticed?" Brother Assist asked, "The job-class composition among these local players is unbalanced? Warriors, Knights, Priests, and Fighters... Have any of you spotted any of these four job classes?"

"There sure aren't many of them!" everyone affirmed his observation.

"Seems like the whole street is just filled with Archers!" they exclaimed.

"And look; most of them appear to be Hunters," Brother Assist continued, saying, "Did this region's terrain skew the job-class balance of this city? No wonder many among us said that their friends who used to live in this city moved away soon after...."

“Hey, friends from Yunduan City, how are you guys doing?” The sound of a familiar voice made everyone turn around, only to see Deep Waters grinning and sitting cross-legged on the rooftop of a nearby house; one of his hands was on his knee, while another was waving toward them.

Chapter 337 - Street Fight

“Scoundrel!” This anger-filled shout came from Sakurazaka Moony.

Many people were affected because he had fallen for Deep Waters’ ruse. Sakurazaka Moony might be reprehensible, but he still felt regret for causing that debacle. In fact, he was so embarrassed by it that he could not look others in the eye. All the members of The Great Hunting mercenary group were equally sheepish about it, and only Fireball looked unperturbed by all this. He could probably be crowned as the King of Shamelessness within The Great Hunting.

Sakurazaka Moony fired off an arrow toward Deep Waters as he was cursing the latter. He strongly wished this shot could behead Deep Waters right at this moment, so he could acquit him and his brothers from their sin. His emotions must have overwhelmed him and caused his shoulders and fingertips to stiffen, as that Snipe he had fired off was way subpar, missing Deep Waters by at least three paces.

“Everyone, hold your fire!” Seeing the other Archers and Mages intending to follow suit and send their own attacks at the enemy, Oathless Sword hastily stopped them with a raise of his hand. At this crucial moment, he had shown an unexpected level of cool-headedness. This was only but a game at the end of the day; killing Deep Waters would not leave his guild leaderless. Besides venting a bit of their pent-up frustration, Oathless Sword knew that this kill would not truly affect the overall situation of the quest.

“What are you trying to do?” Oathless Sword stared at Deep Waters, who was still sitting on the rooftop, as he addressed him.

“He he... Nothing much. I just wanna see how many of you are still alive.” Deep Waters chuckled. “It’s a lot more than what I have expected.”

“It’s not that easy to completely wipe us out,” Oathless Sword replied evenly as he privately instructed on the guild channel, “Thieves, use your Stealth and check our surroundings.”

Deep Waters, for his part, quickly noted those Thieves that had disappeared. Laughing, he said, “Don’t worry; there’s no ambush this time.”

“And you would be kind enough to let us go?” Oathless Sword did not believe a word he heard.

“Of course, not.” Deep Waters laughed again. “I’ve simply changed my tactics this time. We’re going to directly face you all in combat.”

Saying that, Deep Waters’ comrades suddenly flooded the entrance to this street in a grand fashion. All their Archers had their bows with nocked arrows, ready to fire at the drop of a hat.

“Your guild’s archer formation is pretty lethal,” Deep Waters said, “But don’t forget; we Hunters can fire arrows as well.”

Just as Deep Waters said these words, all his Hunters released their bowstrings together.

The arrows flew like a sudden downpour. With some Hunters firing from a squatting position and the others while standing, the arrows sailed in an arc quite similar to Traversing Four Seas’ archer formation. Although the enemy Hunters’ coordination was not comparable to Traversing Four Seas’ archer formation, the Yunduan City’s players were still on a street that did not give much room to maneuver or provide much cover. With the lack of any road to salvation and the gates of Hell opening wide for them, succumbing to this arrow assault was almost a guarantee.

“Guardians, quickly come forward and block the attacks! Charge onward!” Oathless Sword issued this order swiftly. This was actually the correct command. Turning around to flee in such a situation would only expose their backs to the enemies’ arrows.

And with the clear disparity in movement speed between the job classes, it was unlikely that anyone besides Thieves with Fleetfoot could safely escape from this assault.

Nevertheless, the firepower that the enemies possessed was truly high. Traversing Four Seas' archer formation was only consisted of about one hundred fifty players. Meanwhile, due to Linyin City's skewed job-class composition, a majority of the players in it were Hunters. Deep Waters almost had over four hundred Hunters in his guild alone. As a result, it did not take long before white lights flashed intermittently within the ranks of Yunduan City's Guardians who had come forward with the support of Priests from the back.

"Don't rush in foolishly! Archers, get in position and return fire!" Oathless Sword bellowed.

This move proved to be very effective. While the Archers from Yunduan City might not be as numerous as those from Linyin City, they had the protection of the Warriors in front of them while the Archers from Linyin City were essentially defenseless. Faced against Yunduan City's retaliation, the Linyin City's Hunters were clearly more affected and their ensuing shots were no longer as rapid as before.

However, the assault that Deep Waters' guild was currently mounting was not only limited to that. More players began to appear on the rooftops, and these new arrivals were far more fearsome than the Archers standing before them – Mages.

Mages filled the rooftops of the houses lining the street on both sides. Raising their staves in the air to cast spells, they could quite possibly wipe out Yunduan City's entire army if they were to bombard them just like what they had done back in the jungle. People cried out in alarm to draw everyone's attention to the Mages. Following this, the Archers, who had been providing cover for the Guardians' forward charge, turned over to begin firing over on the rooftops where the Mages were, instead. The enemy Mages'

opportunity to cast spells was hampered by the Archers' barrage of arrows on them.

However, although the Archers' volley of arrows successfully interrupted some enemy Mages' chanting, the rest of the Mages managed to avoid their attacks altogether. Flames began to explode on the street and on the rooftops. People died, and others survived....

Both parties engaging in this battle had about the same number of players, but since they were locked in a ranged exchange, only Mages and Archers were of much use. The well-balanced job class composition of Yunduan City's players actually turned into a disadvantage for them at this point, as barely two hundred Archers and Mages on their side could deal with the ranged enemies of close to six hundred.

The number of players on either side might be even, but reality showed that Traversing Four Seas and the mercenaries were on the losing end. Linyin City held the high ground, and their imbalanced job-class composition created by the lack of Priests, which should be a major flaw, was... In this situation, this particular disadvantage had yet to affect the outcome of this engagement.

"Thieves, retreat, circle around, and find a way to take care of them!" Oathless Sword shouted. Since they were unable to match the opponents in ranged combat, Oathless Sword and his men must find a way to engage the enemies in melee. The entrance to the street in front was still dozens of meters away, making it difficult for them to rush in and close the gap, so Oathless Sword could only have the most opportunistic job class, Thieves, that was currently useless in this battle, to back off and search for a chance to re-engage.

Amid all this, plenty of players with extraordinary skills were able to quickly find ways to get into melee range.

The first man to get himself on a rooftop was the other core

member of Traversing Four Seas, Gale Force. Everyone saw him run straight to a wall and executed the Fighter's skill, Swallow Dropkick. He did not direct this kick to anyone but to a wall, instead. Using that momentum created by his attack, he propelled himself up the wall.

With a punch, Gale Force immediately struck a Mage down the rooftop. Hugging the player next to him, he also tossed that man over the ledge. Gale Force could tell how unfavorable their situation was, so his current goal was not to finish off the Mages but to disrupt their formation on the rooftops. They would no longer have much of a problem once he succeeded in disrupting these Mages' formation above the roofs. Nevertheless, one player's Strength was far too limited. The enemy Mages swiftly shifted their position and a whole lot of them hurled Fireball, which could somewhat track its target, to tease Gale Force. A few of them even activated their Arctic Whirlwind to engulf him with its whirlwind.

"Priests, get me two Priests to keep an eye on things up there!" Oathless Sword anxiously yelled.

All the Priests were flustered. Not only did they have to keep healing the Warriors who were tanking the enemy Hunters' incoming arrows, they also had to aid the players who were injured by the Mages' bombardment. Their hands were already full juggling so many fronts of this battle simultaneously, yet Oathless Sword was now calling for two of them to dedicatedly Heal Gale Force....

Fortunately, Gale Force was not the only Fighter in this battalion. Others who saw what Gale Force had done followed suit and tried to replicate his actions. However, not one of them succeeded. Most of the players ended up flying backward and away from the wall instead of upward when they used Swallow Dropkick. The only one who got the closest to executing what Gale Force had done was actually Amethyst's Lie Lie. This lady managed to send herself flying upward, but she unfortunately did not fully

grasp the move's sequence and failed to grab a hold of the top wall when she went by, landing back down to where she was standing moments ago.

As all the Fighters stood up to try again, a second person from Yunduan City managed to make it on the rooftop. Of course, that person was Gu Fei. No one had an easier time getting up the roof besides him, and this was entirely because he had the Blink skill in his spell arsenal. After finding a good position, he extended his hand, disappeared with a swish, and materialized right on a rooftop. In front of him was a man chewing on a piece of straw in his mouth. This calm and confident commander of the opposing side was currently giving out order to all the Mages to target the potential threats that made it on the rooftops.

"Hey, bro. You can't possibly be thinking of killing me, are you?" Deep Waters was not the least bit flustered when Gu Fei appeared before him.

"Why not?" Gu Fei was curious.

"If I'm not mistaken, your PK value right now is 29 points. There's going to be dire consequences if you reach 30 points!" Deep Waters chuckled. He seemed very satisfied with this calculation of his. "So you don't scare me at all."

"You're really humorous!" Gu Fei laughed as he flipped the sword in his hand with a graceful stroke and casually dissipated all the balls of fire flying toward him.

"What skill!" Deep Waters gushed in awe. Gale Force had already been pelted with balls of fire until he was almost seared tender. The rooftops were currently filled with Linyin City's players, so it was not convenient for them to throw out AOE spells, but because there were many of them, hurtling Fireball on their targets was still very effective. Who would have thought that Gu Fei would easily swat away six balls of fire with a swing of his sword, though?

"Here I come!" Gu Fei took two steps forward and attacked Deep

Waters.

“If you want to kill me, why aren’t you chanting a spell?” Deep Waters was still grinning.

“Twin Incineration! Incinerate!” Gu Fei roared. His body turned a full circle as the flames flared around him. Following his pivoting motion, he stepped forward and reduced six Mages into white lights. By the time the fiery glow subsided, he had already turned to Deep Waters, and before the Hunter could react, Gu Fei planted a kick right at the center of his chest in one fluid motion. Deep Waters rolled for a few meters before tumbling over the ledge and landing onto the street. He stared with dumbfounded eyes at Gu Fei.

“Aren’t you a Mage? Why aren’t you using mana on me?” Gu Fei looked down at him from the rooftop and laughed. He quickly turned to slash his left and right as he chanted out respectively, “Descending Wheel of Flames! Descend! Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno! Arise!”

Gu Fei’s casting time would usually allow anyone to escape its AOE, but they were currently all on the rooftops and had limited space. If they wished to evade his spells, they would have to leap down the street. These men were obviously aware of how frightening Gu Fei’s spells were, so plenty of them chose to take the leap of faith. A number of them did not think about which direction they were jumping to in their dazedness and ended up landing on where Yunduan City’s players were at, meeting an ending that could not be expressed in words.

Gu Fei continued to advance deeper into the enemies’ ranks. Although he no longer had any mana left, these Mages were unable to engage him in melee and use AOE spells. The occasional balls of fire that they would toss at Gu Fei were essentially useless as well. Moreover, their Strength was no better than an infant’s since they were Mages. As for Gu Fei’s Mage, it had the upper hand against the average Mages when it came to Strength since he had the

Bandit Leader's Ring and other equipment augmenting that particular stat. Sticking to them and dishing out kicks and punches with great impunity, he handily knocked off all the Mages from the ledge with his most effective moves. In mere seconds, the Mage formation that took up almost half of this side of the wall had been disrupted to the point of them being no more than a shade of their former selves.

Chapter 338 - Go, Linyin City's guards!

Deep Waters almost vomited blood on the street at the sight of just one player sweeping clean half of the mage formation he had set up. He watched Gu Fei calmly walk over a roof's edge and proceed to shove, bump, trip, or kick the Mages down. Deep Waters' biggest wish right now was to get his hands on a mortar and level the entire row of houses with one blast to keep this entire business out of his sight and mind.

Reality was really harsh. With lack of any mortar in his hand, Deep Waters could only continue to instruct the Mages on how to face Gu Fei. However, even he, who was a capable commander, became no more than a joke when facing Gu Fei's indomitable fighting prowess. Deep Waters could feel his heart shattering when his comrade Mages imploringly gazed at him for release.

“All of you, get down. Get the f*ck down now!” Deep Waters sent out this command via the mercenary channel as he ordered the Mages on the street. “Once our men get off there, I want you all to burn down that roof!”

The Mages seemed to have been pardoned with his permission, and each of them quickly jumped down the street. Gu Fei stood on a rooftop and waved at everyone below as he struck a victory pose, angering the enemies so much.

“Descending Wheel of Flames! Descend!”

“Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno! Arise!”

Up the houses and down the street, all the Linyin City's Mages chanted spells together in a volume that reached over seventy decibels. It was quite an imposing sight to behold. However, Gu Fei simply waved his hand to the crowd and softly said, “Translocation! Blink!”

No matter how fast these Mages' spells were, they were simply

not faster than Blink. The roof was indeed engulfed in a sea of flames just like what Deep Waters wanted, yet Gu Fei was no longer there to burn with it and was once more among his comrades on the street.

“Perfect timing!” Gu Fei laughed at Vast Lushness.

Vast Lushness raised her eyebrows. “You’re lucky I was near you.”

“It’s now their turn!” Gu Fei said as he headed toward the other side of the street. Gale Force had been fighting on that side of the rooftops all this while. He could probably dish out a more consistent damage than Gu Fei if not for his skills being below par to the latter. While he did manage to catch his enemies by surprise when he first got on the rooftop and to show off what little skill he had for quite some time, he soon found himself encircled and collaboratively barbequed by the crowd of Mages. Oathless Sword had sent him two Priests, but it took a combination of four Priests to actually keep him barely alive. Had it not been for Gu Fei blasting away a large portion of the Mages, Gale Force would have most likely already lost his life.

Gu Fei had just used his Blink. As such, he had to wait for the spell’s cooldown to finish before he could use it again. Since he did not have Swallow Dropkick that could provide explosive leg strength, he could only borrow the other’s strength to get on the roof. He jogged toward War Without Wounds as he shouted, “Give me a boost!”

War Without Wounds was no stranger to this request as he had done this multiple times when they needed to climb trees in the mercenary PvP tournament. Getting into a half squat and folding his outstretched arms before his chest, he allowed Gu Fei to step on his arms and jerked them upward to propel the latter into the sky.

However, getting up the roof was not like climbing up a tree. Trees had branches that people could conveniently grab a hold of

unlike houses that had flat walls. Moreover, enemies were currently on the rooftops, so if he dawdled too much, any of them could easily beat him back to the ground with a wave of a staff. Gu Fei figured he needed a bit more strength to get on the roof, so he cruelly stepped on to War Without Wounds' shoulder, as though he were climbing up a step ladder, to get himself the needed force.

"Here I come!" Gu Fei shouted. Given how urgent matters were, he saw no need to show off his skills and felt it was better for the Mages to voluntarily leap off the rooftops themselves at the sight of him, allowing him to save plenty of time.

Evidently, the enemies would not back off that easily. These Mages wielded their staves threateningly at Gu Fei. Not bothering to hurl Fireball, each of these Mages unleashed Arctic Whirlwind on Gu Fei without a care for their comrades who might be in the way. These Mages knew that as long as they killed off Gu Fei, they could easily hold their formation on the rooftops.

Gu Fei saw a row of Arctic Whirlwind steadily covering the entire roof before him. He looked backward and saw another row coming from behind him. Realizing that he was cornered from both sides and that he could only escape by leaping down the street, he had no other choice but to do just that. This was when Descending Wheel of Flames came crashing right into the row of Arctic Whirlwind before him. Once Verdict was out for the two moves, an empty path was left behind.

Gu Fei darted right toward it, looked down from the roof, and saw Drifting slightly bow his body toward him once their eyes made contact. The speed at which Arctic Whirlwind moved was not slow in the least, so it was apparent just how impressively high Drifting's level of control and exquisite deftness was from the way he neutralized that Arctic Whirlwind with one Descending Wheel of Flames.

The rest of the Mages lost their sense of security once Gu Fei zealously began engaging them in melee. Learning his lesson from

being pressed from both sides, Gu Fei no longer pushed forward in an orderly fashion. Sending a blow to a side and a kick in another, Gu Fei burrowed deeper into the crowd on the roofs as he ran amok within their ranks. Not just Arctic Whirlwind, even the few Mages who had picked up the Lightning Affinity tree had difficulty targeting Gu Fei with their Thunderbolt.

Since the speed of Lightning Affinity spells was extremely fast, the system did not provide these spells any sort of target-locking assistance. After all, the Lighting Affinity spells already had 100% accuracy. As long as a Lightning Mage uttered the incantation, no one would be able to dodge the spell in time. However, if the target was moving, the Mage would be required to compensate quite a lot. Things like the trembling of the Mages' hands might cause the spells to go askew. Gu Fei was currently darting within the crowd in an unpredictable manner, so the Lighting Mages could not get a lock on him and those that tried to cast Thunderbolt on him never found their mark.

Now that the enemy Mages on this side had been hampered by Gu Fei, the Mages from the other side began to reveal themselves. Having never left the area and seeing that Gu Fei was no longer there, these Linyin City's players began climbing up the roofs on the other side again.

Gu Fei only had Blink and did not have any spells that could let him be in two places at once. Once he took care of one side, others would spring up from the other. He was currently out of mana and was merely employing kicks, punches, and weapons to attack the Mages near him. While it was easy to get them off the roofs like this, killing them would take a far longer time.

Everyone could tell that this situation was not favorable to Yunduan City's players. Gu Fei could be said to be only harassing the enemies and was not actually eradicating them.

To solve this quandary and maintain his lethality, Vast Lushness would have to keep transferring her mana over to Gu Fei as he

fought on. Such a thought made the members of Young Master's Elite shudder. If that happened, how many PK points would Gu Fei accumulate? Did it mean his PK value would break through to the triple digits by the time this battle was over?

While everyone was trying to find a solution to this, Linyin City's players' version of the archer formation suddenly burst into activity. Players yelled as dozens of fully armored Knights bearing swords and shields uniformly squeezed through the originally tidy archer formation and lined themselves up in an orderly fashion.

"What the actual f*ck?!" Linyin City's players cursed. Their organized formation was coincidentally blocked by these NPCs' arrival, interrupting the Archers from continuing their assault.

"Guardsmen!" When the squad finished lining up, they attentively stayed in their positions as a captain-like NPC began to speak. The Linyin City's players that were blocked by these NPCs moaned. They tried to squeeze their way through, but these NPCs stood stock-still. The players dared not to be too forceful, either. After all, they could guess the result of attacking these guards. Of course, a few curious players here and there had tested this out, and death had been the only answer they got....

Not too long ago, Oathless Sword had personally experienced the Strength of Parallel World's NPC guards. Just a handful of guards were enough to beat everyone up effortlessly and route almost seven hundred of his guild members. There was no logic once these men representing the system were involved. Provoking these NPC guards the first time around could be chalked up to curiosity, but provoking them a second time around would just be utter foolishness!

However, right now, these guards' appearance became a blessing in disguise for Yunduan City's players, as the NPCs were unintentionally blocking off Linyin City's Archers from attacking them. Oathless Sword seized this opportunity to quickly order his troops to advance. When they got right up to these guards, the

enemy Archers were only separated from them by a mere few steps. These Archers did not dare keep such proximity with their targets, and they either retreated or dispersed to put some distance between them and Yunduan City's players. With the street entrance cleared from impedance, Oathless Sword and company managed to turn the tide of this battle and temporarily escape the quandary that they were in.

Deep Waters did not hurriedly send his men to give chase because he knew that they were about to witness a legend.

Once a player's PK value reached 30 points, they would be executed on sight by the city guards, losing five levels in one go. This design had already been announced, yet not one player had challenged this limit. Today, someone had finally taken this historical step.

"For justice and honor, Guardsmen, to battle!" After saying this, the captain pulled out his sword and pointed it ahead. "Forward!"

People were either looking at the NPC guards or staring at the lonesome Gu Fei on the roof.

Deep Waters had already ordered his Mages on that side of the rooftops to retreat. He did not know how these guards would do the deed, so he could not guarantee his men's safety during their capturing-and-executing process.

The Linyin City's Mages that were on the opposite roof or down on the street visibly grinned at Gu Fei.

"What happened to your arrogance, twerp?!" someone taunted.

Gu Fei did not bother to answer this man. Taking out an apple, he slowly munched on it as he watched the city guards' every move.

One step forward... two steps... three steps... The guards slowly drew closer to their target. Unlike the players who would sprint toward their targets like their lives depended on it, these NPCs just

calmly marched forward in an easy but measured pace, clearly showing the absolute tyranny of the system.

The atmosphere grew heavy.

As the players from Yunduan City made their escape, they temporarily stopped and watched this scene from afar.

The Linyin City's Archers, who had retreated a few steps away, came back in bits and drabs to watch the show.

Gu Fei was still calmly eating his apple.

The guards were still on the street, yet they were getting closer with every step. Mages from Deep Waters' guild consciously made way for these guards as they looked forward to these NPCs tear Gu Fei into pieces.

The guards finally struck. A heavy-looking one-handed sword created a whooshing sound as it slashed.

The guards were still on the street, yet a Mage already fell.

The one who had fallen was a Mage from Deep Waters' guild, but he did not lose his life. The guards proceeded to flip him face down and pin his shoulders down onto the ground to detain him.

Gu Fei guffawed. "Do you guys even know the rules when it comes to PK? Anyone with PK value above 20 points will still have trouble with the guards!"

Chapter 339 - An Unsatisfying Conclusion

Plenty of players in Parallel World had experienced PvPing, but few came close to attaining Gu Fei's extreme levels at it. The average players would fight and kill on given occasions, but they would often strive to keep their PK value below 10 points if they could help it. The Mages who would act as the ranged artillery of their groups and guilds would often garner a rather high PK value as a result, but they would rarely go past 20 points.

Therefore, excluding the Insta-kill Mage Gu Fei in the count, only a handful managed to cross such a historically unique threshold of accumulating over 20 PK points.

Take today's battle as an example; the Mages from Deep Waters' guild had managed to reduce the escort army from Yunduan City by a good half under their constant assault and concentrated bombardment, making at least 500 – if not 600 – kills this night alone. If this kill count was split evenly among twenty players, each of them would accrue about 25 to 30 PK points each.

Naturally, the reality of the situation did not have everyone sharing these PK points evenly. However, because they were only able to insta-kill their targets by overlapping their spells, there were bound to be players who would be 'luckier' and garner more killing points than the others. PK points were not awarded like killing a Boss, where the system would calculate the damage dealt to determine who the Boss's kill belonged to. Since PK value depended entirely on the final strike, whoever did the killing blow would be awarded the PK point.

Out of all these Linyin City's Mages, only about seven or eight had PK value over 20 points.

In any case, Gu Fei had not really done an in-depth research about the PvP rules; his knowledge about it came entirely from his personal experience PvPing. When the PK value went above 20

points, a player would not attract a manhunt from the guards like what was happening to Gu Fei right now. However, if the offender happened to be in the vicinity of a patrolling guard, the guard would take the appropriate actions against the offender. This squad of guards' purpose here was indeed to execute Gu Fei, but they would naturally apprehend those Mages from Deep Waters' guild who had over 20 PK points when they came across them along the way.

The Mage that the guards first pinned down was not killed but was captured alive, instead. This was in accordance to the rules governing PvP, where players who had PK value over 30 points would be executed on the spot while players with 20 to 30 PK points would be captured and sent to prison along with a penalty of losing two levels....

With a PK value of over 20 points, the offender was expected to be jailed for over 40 hours. Adding the two levels that he would lose, it sounded as though his punishment was harsher than Gu Fei with a PK value of over 30 points who would just lose five levels upon execution and would not be further detained for long hours.

Moreover, the system did not care if the PK points they had earned were a result of doing a guild quest.

The other players could only sheepishly watch as their comrade got apprehended, powerless to stop the system.

“Quickly run!” A few players had a sudden idea and urged their Mages, who were merely standing in a row, to flee as they moved to form a human wall. These players were thinking that as long as they did not interfere and merely stood there, coincidentally blocking the guards’ way, these mindless NPCs would have to find another path to get to their comrades without going through them.

In the end, the guards proved to be more foolhardy than them. Completely ignoring the player-made wall before them, they marched onward without stopping. One of the guards sent a player

flying when it directly bumped into him, while another guard trampled a player underfoot. The guards were clearly unperturbed by their actions and attempts as they continued the chase for the ‘criminal’.

“Traps! Set up traps!” someone shouted.

Plenty of Hunters quickly began setting up traps. The Mages that had come their way naturally circumvent these contraptions. However, the guards did not have that level of AI to do the same and directly stepped on to the traps.

“Ha!” In that moment of glee, they heard the sound of metal snapping, yet this sound was produced by the guards smashing the traps underfoot instead of becoming trapped in its steel maw.

Gu Fei was obviously no stranger to this. Back when Nightmare of Death had set up traps to ensnare him, he had witnessed the Werewolves from Suoyun Village do the same. The difference in level in MMOs was truly an insurmountable gully for players and NPCs alike.

Not one of the few Linyin City’s Mages was spared and all were easily captured alive by the NPC guards.

While Gu Fei was delighting over their misfortune, not once did he forget that he was the guards’ main target all along. The Linyin City’s Mages attempt to hide from the guards managed to lure a portion of them away. Nonetheless, most of them were dead-set on capturing and continued to make their way toward the idly standing Gu Fei.

Just as Gu Fei was wondering how the guards would reach him on the roof, the captain suddenly bent his legs slightly before launching himself up from the ground. The mud beneath his feet churned and splashed forth, like a jet plane launching, as the captain flew directly toward the roof with his greatsword already raised above his head. Midair, the captain cleaved the huge weapon toward where Gu Fei was standing.

“Earthsplitter!” the players, who managed to identify this move, shouted.

The animation for the Warrior skill Earthsplitter was shown in Parallel World’s promotional videos. Young Master’s Elite, Traversing Four Seas, and other players who had seen the game’s NPC guards in action before had the same question floating in their heads, In the end, are these guys Knights or Warriors? They were just too versatile.

Although this cleave was shocking, Gu Fei’s reaction was not slow and quickly hopped to the side to avoid the attack. Fortunately, the captain’s sword cleave did not change trajectory and really landed on the spot he had aimed for. Still, with the captain’s one knee on the ground, his greatsword brutally smashed that spot of the roof.

Dust scattered. That greatsword nearly cleaved the entire roof into two. Gu Fei only felt a slight tremor beneath his feet, yet a huge chunk of his HP got reduced by it. Although Earthsplitter did not directly connect to Gu Fei’s body, it was still able to deal damage on him. In gaming terms, this attack dealt AOE damage. Had it not been for Windchaser’s Blessing increasing his HP, that attack of the captain would have already insta-killed him. It was simply unimaginable how deadly the greatsword’s strike would be if it connected to the target head on.

Facing such a strong foe, Gu Fei did not yield. Just as the NPC climbed to his feet, Gu Fei uttered the incantation for Twin Incineration to return the blow.

In the end, Gu Fei’s infallible Twin Incineration, which had not yet failed to connect to a target, broke its pristine record today.

The captain brought up his shield by raising his right arm and easily blocked Gu Fei’s strike. Twin Incineration left a flaming streak as it scratched insignificantly past the shield’s surface.

His opponent’s actions were quick and were entirely mechanical.

Just from this exchange alone, Gu Fei could tell that he would have a difficult time defeating this guard captain.

Gu Fei had two ways to deal with NPCs like this. The first was to move faster than his opponent. In that way, even if it had the intention to dodge or block Gu Fei's strikes, it would be unable to do so. The second was to grasp the opponent's attack patterns and come up with counter moves.

The first option was impossible in his current situation. While Gu Fei did not know whether the captain was a Knight or a Warrior, the fact that the NPC had a shield meant that he must have a high defense. Gu Fei figured it would be highly improbable to attempt cutting the opponent as the NPC clearly possessed a flawless and inhuman reaction time.

As for the second way... He was currently pressed for time so now was not the time to employ that. With the captain taking the lead to engage with Gu Fei, the other guards also began making their way up the roof using the same Earthsplitter skill.

It was evident that Gu Fei would lose his life here if he were to take even the slightest impact from these NPCs' AOE attacks. Fearing that running might be too late, Gu Fei hurriedly used Blink to distance himself by five meters from the guards.

The captain of the guards once again took the lead in attacking and used Charge to chase after Gu Fei. He somersaulted to his right, leaped from the roof down to the street, sprinting away once he landed.

Looking backward as he fled, he saw some guards leap off the roof to continue their chase of him while the others replace their weapons with bows to fire off arrows at him.

"WHAT THE F*CK?!" All the players were once more riled up. Apparently, these guards were not just Warriors or Knights, they were g*dd*mn Archers as well!

After Gu Fei fluidly evaded an incoming arrow, he began to stick close to the wall as he ran onward. This caused the guards who had been firing arrows at him to lose sight of their target. Meanwhile, the guards that were hot on his heels did not give up their chase. With movement speed that did not seem to be any lower than Gu Fei's, they relentlessly pursued him. These NPCs had speed, Strength and skills from almost every job class. The average webnovels would usually have their protagonist demonstrating such almighty mastery, but, unexpectedly, the game designers were shameless enough to program Parallel World's guards with such level of invincibility before players themselves could attain it.

Gu Fei occasionally looked backward as he fled and saw the guards effortlessly chasing after him uniformly. Gu Fei found this to be quite a waste. If there were perhaps only one or two guards chasing after him, he would probably consider stopping to patiently exchange a few blows or spar with them. Unfortunately, there were many guards pursuing him right now... At the end of the day, this squad's main target was Gu Fei. Although the fleeing Mages with over 20 PK points led one or two of them away, Gu Fei would be very foolish to expect the same treatment.

The players' nosy mentality had also surfaced at this moment, and quite a lot of them actually followed to watch the show. Deep Waters and quite a few guildmates, Svelte Dancer, Royal God Call, and other players with high movement speed all made the effort to follow the action.

Having witnessed these guards unceremoniously trample the traps before, Gu Fei did not bother to cast Electric Wall to stall his pursuers. Instead, he saved that bit of mana to use Blink twice later to increase the distance between him and the guards.

As the chase continued, Svelte Dancer, Royal God Call and many other acquaintances of Gu Fei even had the mind to send Gu Fei a message asking what sort of plan he had in mind. Gu Fei did not reply to any of them as he was busy running on the streets.

Eventually, the sight of a compound loomed before him. The sign by the wall of this compound showed a bow and an arrow, identifying it as Linyin City's Archery Range. Without a second thought, Gu Fei dove head-first into this safe zone.

"I'm gonna log off first; I'll see you all tomorrow." Gu Fei managed to squeeze this message before he disappeared in a white light as he logged off.

"D*MM*T!" The players, who had been following him thus far, felt miserable at witnessing such an abrupt conclusion to the matter. The hunt for the world's first player with PK value of over 30 points had actually ended in such an unsavory manner. It was just like a movie that had no ending that left the viewers infuriated.

The city guards instantly formed up and left when Gu Fei logged out. Players that were loitering about berated Gu Fei's disgraceful action. Suddenly, everyone exclaimed and immediately split back into two groups, each standing on a side of the street.

Minutes ago, all these players were fighting against one another with their lives on the line. At this moment, they had gathered together as to watch Gu Fei's escape. It was truly unsightly.

"Everyone, calm down!" Deep Waters suddenly spoke, "We're merely doing our quest. Since our target isn't here, there's no need for us to fight."

He then whipped his hand out and scattered a handful of Whitestone Dust. Instantly, a Thief, who had been edging closer to Deep Waters, appeared in the middle of the street!

"Please, fair lady, what's the point of doing all this?" Deep Waters laughed.

"Enough talk! Go to hell already!" The lady tightly gripped her dagger as she sped up toward him.

Chapter 340 - Take care of your drinking expenses

“What speed!” This one stab scared Deep Waters to the point of breaking out in cold sweat and he tumbled backward to dodge the attack. Fortunately, the movement-speed increase his equipment provided as a fellow Unyielding Expert was on par with Svelte Dancer’s, and this allowed him to somehow dodge the move. He turned back to look again, yet the lady’s figure was nowhere to be seen.

Deep Waters was shocked. He had just interrupted her Stealth, so how was she able to re-enter Stealth mode again?

“Dust!” he quickly yelled. Plenty of his men were watching this fight, and since Whitestone Dust was a mandatory item for them, his men carried some. The entire street was instantly filled with white powder as his men scattered Whitestone Dust, yet they still saw no trace of the lady.

The veteran Deep Waters quickly realized that his opponent must be using a special skill or specific equipment, so he did not dawdle. Knowing his opponent’s intention to eviscerate him, he quickly made his escape. No matter how powerful this enhanced equipment or skill was, she should be unable to attain Fleetfoot’s speed while in Stealth, right?

“Everyone, disperse!” Deep Waters shouted. He quickly bolted away for several meters before abruptly stopping to look backward and watch his comrades scatter. He had no intention of entangling with these players from Yunduan City any further. Although the enemies suffered substantial losses from today’s clashes, his guild suffered quite a lot as well.

Take Deep Waters’ original plan as an example; using traps to ensnare Yunduan City’s players and making it difficult for them to move even the merest inch were Deep Waters’ method of forcing

them to abandon their quest to minimize the losses and deaths... Who would have guessed that the enemies would have an indomitable player that could capture him alive a whole thirty meters away from their position when he came forward to negotiate? They even took inspiration from that embarrassing moment of his life to employ that inhumane human minesweeping method and extricate themselves from that earlier mess.

“F*CK!” Deep Waters subconsciously rubbed his nose when he thought of this, as though the pain from that trap biting on his nose still lingered.

The players from Yunduan City somewhat wished to continue fighting with those from Linyin City, but their opponents did not give them the chance to do so. It was obvious that these Hunters' movement speed was superb. Now that the enemies had scattered all over the city, the Yunduan City's players could not even hope of catching up to them.

Deep Waters happily propped his one hand on the wall as his other hand continually rubbed his nose. As for that lady who was after him, she finally appeared before him ten seconds later with her dagger a mere centimeter away from his throat.

“He he!” Deep Waters calmly patted the wall he was leaning on and said, “Safe zone.”

The lady audibly gritted her teeth. “If it isn't logging off, then it's fleeing to a safe zone; you're all so useless.”

“How should I address this lady before me?” Deep Waters asked.

“Svelte Dancer,” Svelte Dancer curtly answered as she sheathed her dagger. Her target was clearly right before her, yet she was unable to kill him. This was one of the most painful situations in MMOs, for the furthest distance that could exist between a hunter and prey was when the latter was inside a safe zone while the former was just outside it.

“Oh...” Deep Waters gave a long sigh when he heard her reply. “I’ve heard so much about you.” Svelte Dancer was considered by many as the apex expert. Despite Deep Waters being part of the esteemed ranks of the Five Unyielding Experts in Parallel World, he did not have the kind of prestige Svelte Dancer had had in other MMOs.

“Hmph!” Svelte Dancer snorted at that. She then turned to call another lady and took their leave together. Given how the Amethyst Rebirth ladies’ nosiness, there was no way they would miss this show. Unfortunately, they needed fast movement speed to keep up so, in the end, only Svelte Dancer and an Archer with a full-Agility build managed to chase their way through. The other ladies, such as the Thief Will-low, had been left halfway.

“You shouldn’t be like this when we next meet. After all, we’re fellow Unyielding Experts!” Deep Waters shouted after Svelte Dancer as he remained where he was – inside the safety of the safe zone.

Svelte Dancer turned her head over and said with much aplomb. “You’re two levels under me!”

Deep Waters was depressed!

Gaining levels in Parallel World was difficult, but losing levels in this game was easy. Deep Waters was truly dealt a painful blow this time around. Although he only lost a level, he technically dropped by two levels since he was just about to reach level 42 when he died.

The Five Unyielding Experts were able to maintain their positions on the experience leaderboard mainly because none of them had lost a level before. Not only was today the day he lost a level, he also dropped a significant amount of experience. Level 40... This was the level many players reached after the PvP tournaments. In fact, just in his guild alone, there were a few who were already at level 41.

Deep Waters sighed with deep regret. As he was leaving the safe zone, he suddenly sensed something. He hurriedly retracted his step and shouted, “Who’s there?!” He then threw a handful of Whitestone Dust.

The man caught in the cloud of dust coughed loudly. This person was a little further to him than Svelte Dancer was, nicely positioned within an arm’s swing of Deep Waters. Thus, when he scattered the Whitestone Dust, or more accurately, flung it out, the person got hit straight on the face.

“Oh, it’s you!” Deep Waters dusted his hands. The person whom he had caused to eat a mouthful of Whitestone Dust was Sword Demon.

Sword Demon’s expression was placid as he wiped the dust off his face. “You have a skill that counters Stealth?”

“Peep! It’s a skill Hunters have,” Deep Waters answered.

“What’s the point of you using this, then?!” Sword Demon began dusting his clothes after he was done wiping his face clean of the dust.

“The skill informs me that there are people in Stealth nearby, but it won’t tell their exact location. Whitestone Dust is the only way I can find those who are invisible. Ha ha ha!” Deep Waters laughed as he helped Sword Demon with dusting his clothes.

“You’re very cautious,” Sword Demon commended.

“In this city, traps are hidden everywhere. Thieves in Stealth are about; it’s better to be safe than sorry.” After saying this, Deep Waters asked him, “You can just directly approach me. Why bother using Stealth?”

“Because the streets here are filled with traps and Thieves in Stealth are everywhere...” Sword Demon still had that blank and emotionless look on his face.

“He he!” Deep Waters chuckled as he finally stepped out of the

safe zone. He slung his arm around Sword Demon's shoulders and left the premise together. "Where's Drinking Addict?"

"The tavern."

"Ha ha ha!" Deep Waters was in awe.

"He no longer goes by that name, though," Sword Demon said.

"Oh? What's he changed to?" Deep Waters asked.

Sword Demon was quiet for a good moment before saying, "Young Master Han...."

Deep Waters was also silent for a moment before saying, "That's a really flashy name, don't you agree?"

"I agree!" Sword Demon said coolly.

The two men chatted all the way to the tavern. The taverns in Linyin City were also different from the ones in other cities in that they looked like the laboratory of a witch. Pushing the door open and entering after, the sight that greeted them was an interior that was entirely made of wood except for the glasses, which people used to drink the liquid in the establishment.

"It's pretty special, eh?" Deep Waters asked. He had already spotted Young Master Han and the rest. He waved his hand in greeting as he made his way over.

Sword Demon followed closely behind and introduced to the other men seated on the table, "They are Royal God Call, War Without Wounds, and Brother Assist."

"F*ck me, f*ck me, f*ck me!" Deep Waters cursed repeatedly in his astonishment. The exaggerated look on his face really satisfied these experts' vanity.

"The clouds in Ynduan City are truly filled with experts!" Deep Waters exhaled.

"You humble us!" The three men happily downplayed his words.

“Such a pity that that guy isn’t here!” Deep Waters’ next words betrayed the complicated feelings he had inside.

“He he...” Royal God Call and the others laughed dryly at this. Ever since Gu Fei began hanging out with them, these grizzled gamers got used to being obscured in his shadow. No matter where they went, Gu Fei would always be the focus of everyone’s attention whether he liked it or not.

These men took their seats, drank their liquors, and exchanged pleasantries. Eventually, Deep Waters asked, “Have you guys settled that thing yet?”

“Don’t try and dig out information from us,” Young Master Han quietly said.

“He he...” A dry laugh. It was yet another dry laugh.

“Speaking of which...” Sword Demon seized this chance to change the topic. “I don’t think you started off in Linyin City!”

“Yup. I made my way over quite a while after,” Deep Waters replied.

“Why here?” Sword Demon asked.

“Is there a need to ask? I’m sure Coco’s here!” Young Master Han said.

Royal God Call and the others had no clue what they were talking about, blankly staring at these three men.

“Eh? Your girlfriend?” Brother Assist proved how well-informed he was when he guessed the answer.

Deep Waters nodded his head.

“Wow! Bro, you’ve got the moves!” War Without Wounds and Royal God Call leaped up when they heard this. They loved this sort of gossip.

“He he...” Deep Waters had a surprisingly shy smile on his lips. The mischievous look on his face showed that his feeling was

genuine, and it was not the playful words of ‘hubby’ and ‘wifey’ that players would usually share with one another in jest.

“Where is she?! Where is she?! Get her to come out and let us meet her!” Royal God Call and War Without Wounds pestered, craning their necks to look around with palpable excitement, as though the lady in question were already present but Deep Waters were just hiding her away.

“She’s offline,” Deep Waters answered.

“1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...” Young Master Han’s fingers shot up one by one as he counted. “This should be the sixth MMO you’re playing together!”

“Yup!” Deep Waters blissfully nodded his head.

“You’re my idol!” War Without Wounds and Royal God Call continued to gush, as though they were the ones tying the knot.

“One more and you’ll get the seven year itch.” Young Master Han nodded.

“F*ck your ancestors!” Deep Waters cursed.

“We’ll surely come and meet you two if we’ve got the chance!” War Without Wounds and Royal God Call were really looking forward to this meeting. They really wanted to see how a couple with such a solid relationship looked like to better develop their budding ‘business’.

“Oh, when are you guys leaving?” Deep Waters asked.

“AHEM,” Young Master Han interrupted.

“Man, you’re still such an irritating person!” Deep Waters sighed.

“I am proud of my ability to remain unchanged despite doing the same thing every day.” Young Master Han toasted himself.

“Well, you’re paying for your alcohol expenses.” Deep Waters rolled his eyes as he turned to Sword Demon. “Have you heard? There’s a rumor going around about a player with the Chemist

crafting profession who discovered a tobacco plant, which can apparently be used to make cigarettes.”

“Are you for real?” Sword Demon’s eyes brightened.

“Is that true? Why haven’t I heard a word about this before?” Brother Assist was extremely astonished by this news. There was rarely ever a thing that broke without him knowing. The feeling he had right now was exactly like someone witnessing the execution of an ultimate move that insta-killed someone during a PvP match.

Chapter 341 - A Temporary Truce

Brother Assist's shock was nothing compared to Sword Demon's excitement, as his eyes literally lit up when he heard this. "Are you for real?"

"It's just a rumor," Deep Waters replied and everybody settled down.

"That's wonderful." It was rare for Sword Demon to get so excited. In actuality, Parallel World was an extremely challenging affair for the heavy smokers out there. Plenty of players looking melancholic and irate were entirely due to their addiction to smoking, which the MMO had been unable to help stem. This sort of suffering was something non-smokers would never understand.

Not smoking for twenty-four hours straight was a lot harder for Sword Demon than grinding on monsters for twenty-four hours straight. His old IGN 'Smoking Addict' was not just for show. Rumors had it that two pounds of cigarette ash could be found in the keyboard he often used, and that was only the ash that accidentally fell between the crevices.

Actually, a big reason why the all-powerful Sword Demon in other MMOs was looking more sullen in Parallel World was precisely because this craving of his could not be fulfilled. "Give me a cigarette" was already an unattainable dream for Sword Demon, so anyone could imagine just how huge this news that Deep Waters had shared with him was.

"I'll help you ask around," Brother Assist told Sword Demon.

Sword Demon nodded his head vigorously.

With this topic concluded as well as the introduction and small talk out of the way, Deep Waters took his identity as a local seriously and asked with a wave of his hand, "Gentlemen, what are your plans for tonight?"

The mercenaries looked at one another before answering, “This city seems to be more dangerous than Yueye City, so we think it’s better to keep a low profile.”

“Let me give you all a casual tour around the city, then. This way, when someone asks you guys what Linyin City is like, you will at least have something good to say about this place,” Deep Waters offered.

“Is there a need for this?” They clearly had no interest in sightseeing.

“You guys have nothing to do anyway, right?” Deep Waters chuckled before asking this.

“Why don’t we go erase our PK value?” Royal God Call suggested. He had originally wanted to do some questing, but the first quest he had come across needed him to head into the jungle and look for a certain NPC there. As such, Royal God Call unhesitatingly abandoned the said quest. Arriving at a foreign city like this, for someone who would even lose his way when walking down the main avenue in a city, it would probably take him a lifetime to find his way out if he were to wander in the jungle by himself.

This suggestion caused Deep Waters’ eyebrow to twitch. These mercenaries’ PK value was undoubtedly earned at the expense of his guildmates’ lives. Deep Waters knew that these experts before him were the reason why his guild had incurred quite a heavy loss this time around. That Drifting fellow also killed quite a handful by himself. Deep Waters had previously received intel about a female Thief with superb killing prowess; he had no idea on who it was at first, but after that earlier incident at the spawn point, he now knew that the female Thief who had torn into his guild like wet paper was none other than the top level player in Parallel World, Svelte Dancer.

“What do you guys think? Let’s go do it. Since Deep Waters is offering to tour us, he can lead the way for us!” Royal God Call

suggested in earnest.

“Aren’t you the only one who needs someone to lead the way?” Young Master Han had already seen through Royal God Call’s intention. Given how directionally challenged he was, how would he manage to do something like ‘Bounty Mission’ in a city he was unfamiliar with when it required him to know how to read coordinates? As such, he was trying to get Deep Waters to guide him – a truly crafty request, indeed.

“This guy here is helpless when it comes to directions,” Sword Demon explained Royal God Call’s dilemma to Deep Waters. “Royal doing this sort of mission alone will only end with him getting lost, instead.”

“But you all can’t possibly pick the same target for the ‘Bounty Mission’!” Deep Waters exclaimed.

“You don’t need to guide all of us. Just help Royal out. We can easily manage on our own,” Sword Demon and the rest said.

With this discussion settled, everyone readied their gear and then set off. Only Young Master Han remained seated.

“What about you?” Deep Waters cast him a sidelong glance. He was aware of this man’s quirks and knew for certain that Young Master Han did not have a PK point to his name.

Standing up, Young Master Han answered, “I’m going to discuss how to take care of your d*mn guild tomorrow.”

Deep Waters’ eyes shone when he heard this, but Young Master Han’s next words effectively put a stop to his budding plan. “Don’t bother sending Thieves to follow me. Look.” Young Master Han brought two pouches up Deep Waters’ eye level.

Deep Waters naturally recognized those pouches to be the same as what the players of Linyin City used to store Whitestone Dust.

“I’ve bought two pouches of that dust while strolling along the streets; I’d recommend you guys to do the same,” Young Master

Han said.

Deep Waters was speechless. There was indeed such a business thriving in Linyin City; after all, not every player was willing or even diligent enough to make the long trip between the two cities just for the Whitestone Dust. Therefore, with this sort of thinking, some players sold this item to the locals. Realistically, players would not earn much from such transactions, so mainly the poor newbies would sell this stuff.

These men chatted until the tavern entrance and then split up, with Young Master Han walking off alone, while Deep Waters brought the others over to Linyin City's Bounty Assignment Hall. This was Brother Assist's first time doing 'Bounty Mission', so he was the most excited among these men. Knights and Priests were merely support job classes before level 40. Upon reaching level 40, they could choose between the two paths of Light and Darkness. The Priest job class possibly had the most diverging paths as far as Job Class Advancement went.

Holy Knights would continue to focus on blessings and even gaining access to some healing spells from the Priest job class. This was also when they would gain access to the highly anticipated group buff: party-wide skill. As for the other job classes, they could only learn a few basic tactical skills.

Meanwhile, the Dark Knights would go down the path of slaughter. Instead of blessings, this job class's skills would be filled with death and malice, allowing players who advanced into this to become a proper combat job class. Having chosen to be a Dark Knight, Brother Assist would no longer have to hang back in every fight they came across. The recent large-scale battle they just participated in Linyin City was the first time Brother Assist had tainted himself with PK points.

Although this was an entirely violent event, since it was his first time killing another player, Brother Assist considered it as a wonderful experience. Right now, he could not help but be a little

excited at the prospect of doing ‘Bounty Mission’.

When they arrived at a certain corner of the street, Deep Waters suddenly halted his steps. Straining his neck and peeking over a wall, he then raised his hand and pointed to a direction. “It’s over there.”

The men looked at the direction he was pointing and saw a huge hall about five hundred meters away. Based on his action, Deep Waters did not seem to have any intention of accompanying them directly to it.

“So there it is. Let’s go!” These men urged Deep Waters to hurry.

“You guys go there by yourselves. I’ll just wait here for your return,” Deep Waters told them.

“What’s the matter?” The four men were perplexed.

“Right now... It’s a little inappropriate for me to be seen with you guys. It’s best if I don’t show up. You guys should be careful yourselves,” Deep Waters warned.

“What’s the matter?” The four men were even more confused.

“There’s our quest, right?” Deep Waters laughed bitterly.

The four of them instantly realized what he meant. After such a huge battle, many players involved in it should have accumulated PK value. Everyone would be striving to clear off this PK value with the battle on hold. Who knew when the next engagement would occur? Therefore, clearing their PK value now would at least lessen the burden if or when the fighting resumed.

At this time, Deep Waters was currently the commander of one of the parties involved. Assisting the enemies to erase their PK value would make it awkward for either party involved. Although Deep Waters had made it clear that his connection to Sword Demon and Young Master Han would not come into play, this only made it more inappropriate for them to be seen together.

If the Linyin City's players saw their boss helping the enemies, they would surely feel discontented with him. If it was Yunduan City's players who saw Young Master's Elite receiving aid from the enemy commander, given how Oathless Sword and his men were treating them, such an act would only deepen their suspicions over their loyalty. While Young Master's Elite might have a clear conscience about this and did not really care about Oathless Sword and the others' opinion, Deep Waters was the leader of his guild, and that position of power meant that he could not treat this matter lightly. Thus, he made the conscious decision of stopping five hundred meters away from the Bounty Assignment Hall and letting them pick up their bounties alone.

"It's only five hundred meters. You can't possibly lose your way, right?" Deep Waters smiled as he said this to Royal God Call.

"I should be fine... No problem!" Royal God Call stared fixedly at the Bounty Assignment Hall five hundred meters in front of him. He was still not 100% certain that he would not get lost despite having the place in his line of sight.

"Hey. You're not going there alone. We'll be going with you to pick up our bounties, too." Waving his hand toward Deep Waters, Sword Demon dragged Royal God Call toward the Bounty Assignment Hall with the others.

"I'll be waiting." Deep Waters shrunk back to a corner of the wall and leaned on it. He seemed to be in deep thought. Suddenly, his shoulders seized up and he distanced himself from the base of the wall as though he had been seized and tossed away from it. It was unknown when his hand got a hold of a pouch of Whitestone Dust, but he scattered a handful of it in the next instant. A red figure appeared behind him, but before Deep Waters could make out the entire person, the figure disappeared once more.

"Why is it you again?!" Deep Waters spat.

Plenty of players were walking on the street, and when they saw

Deep Waters leap and shout while tossing out a handful of Whitestone Dust, they instantly realized what was happening. A Thief in Stealth was over in that corner! Everyone vigilantly eyed that particular corner of the street, with a few even preparing to flee at any moment's notice. Someone quickly rushed to Deep Waters' side and warily asked, "What's going on?"

Deep Waters recognized this man as someone from his guild. Dragging him to a side, he was about to explain the situation to the person when the red figure that was now covered with Whitestone Dust once more appeared and dashed toward them at an unbelievable speed. Before the man could react, the rushing figure was already next to him. In the following moment, the man was turned into a beam of white light by the figure's attack that he had been unable to defend himself against.

Of course, the person who had appeared was none other than Svelte Dancer. She kept her dagger, swept her gaze over to Deep Waters, and said derisively, "What are you crying out for? It's not like you're my target here."

Deep Waters' mouth hung agape. He had indeed thought Svelte Dancer was targeting him, so he had evaded so nimbly and had not considered warning his comrade of a looming danger. Sadly, it was already too late to say anything to the man by the time Deep Waters wised up on Svelte Dancer's real target.

Watching his comrade get eliminated by another, Deep Waters would naturally not just stand there without doing anything. However, before he could strike, he saw Svelte Dancer engulf herself in a white glow and disappear in an instant.

Deep Waters was dumbfounded, impressed over the number one pay-to-win player's willingness of using a teleportation scroll without a moment's hesitation!

Chapter 342 - The Undercurrent beneath the Peace

Deep Waters was indeed a player who had been to many places as he was able to tell with a glance that the white light that had engulfed Svelte Dancer was from her use of a teleportation skill; a country bumpkin would have thought it was her dying or getting forcefully disconnected. Moreover, mainly players from Yueye City would know of the existence of Windchaser's Emblem – an item akin to a product only available to select people or circle.

Not knowing where Svelte Dancer had gone to, Deep Waters hurriedly sent his guildmate, who had just been killed off, a message expressing his condolence, only to receive a [The user is no longer in a serviceable area.] system notification. The man was evidently still online, so there could only be one reason why he could not be contacted: He was serving time in prison.

Deep Waters quickly deduced that Svelte Dancer was probably doing 'Bounty Mission' as well. Initially, he had thought that she was randomly killing his guildmates in the city; now, he felt that it was more logical to assume that she was doing 'Bounty Mission'. If someone was really going around and rampantly killing his men, the guild channel would long explode into a flurry of activities. Seeing that everything was as quiet as ever and no one was reporting anything, it could only be said that those who had been killed off were sent straight to prison. With that being the case, it would truly be impossible for them to inform the rest about their plight.

Seems that many are spending their time in prison today... Deep Waters thought to himself. The players who had collaterally been apprehended by the guards pursuing Gu Fei were also sent to prison, so who knew how many tables of mahjong were formed by those stuck in prison right now? Deep Waters found it comical

when he thought about this that way. However, his expression quickly turned sour when he realized something: These players who were currently squatting in jail, especially those who had PK value of over 20 points, would be stuck there for the next two days or so, and that was on the premise that they would not log off while doing time.

Unfortunately, the reality of the situation dictated that it was implausible. Just the boredom of being stuck in prison for twenty-four hours would make many of them divide their prison time into several hours in a week... As for those who were required to spend forty-eight hours in prison....

Being imprisoned for long hours would normally not be detrimental to anyone besides the person themselves, but since their guild was currently at war with another force, losing a good chunk of manpower was truly disastrous for them. A swathe of players in his guild had earned themselves PK points from today's battle. Those who only had a few PK points could be ignored, but those who had rather high PK value could not. After all, they would have to be in jail for several hours. Deep Waters reckoned at least several dozens of players had PK value of 5 points and above, and most of them were probably Mages.

The guild was very well-versed with group PvP. Using traps to restrict their enemies in the jungle, they would then utilize sneak attacks to harass and deploy their Mages to obliterate. In the city, Archers' arrows would suppress the enemies and Mages would obliterate!

No matter which way one looked at this, Mages were the deciding factor to close out their assaults. As for their Hunters, they were only good at firing sneaky shots from their hiding spots. And regarding the imposing arrow formation of Yunduan City's Traversing Four Seas, Linyin City was just not the right environment to practice something that focused on positioning and arrangement.

With how this city's streets varied in width, there was a limit to the number of players that they could field in a street fight. The full extent of their firepower would at most include the first three or four rows of Archers in front that had direct vision of the enemies, and everyone else would have to fire arrows in arcs. This particular move was something new that they had learned from Traversing Four Seas' Sharpshooters today. In fact, their execution of it was a mess, and some of them even almost shot down their Mages on the rooftops by accident.

Doing a rough calculation of the eventual clash, the combat might of Deep Waters' guild would depend on a street's width. Most likely, their guild with over three hundred Archers could only field about thirty to fifty players to deal damage to the enemies. The only upside that Deep Waters could think of regarding this was how they could quickly replace their vanguard with the second row of players. They would merely last longer in a battle of attrition and have a more significant Snipe efficacy.

With many of their Mages sent to prison, it was likely that in their fight later with the enemies, Deep Waters' guild would lose plenty of its artillery battery. Therefore, it was really hard to imagine how they would fare in that upcoming clash with just their Hunters' messy shots and without their Mages' highly efficient firepower.

The more Deep Waters thought of this, the more worried he became.

Yunduan City's players act of erasing their PK points no longer seemed to just be affecting the individuals involved, as it was possible for many of his men to find themselves in prison if they did not quickly clear off their PK value. This was a very heavy loss.

With that in mind, Deep Waters hurriedly sent out a message on the guild channel requesting those who were still online to quickly help their Mages erase the PK value to their names.

“Why is it suddenly so urgent?” the guild members asked.

“It’s very important to be quick about this,” Deep Waters replied.

“But I was just about to—” Many of them started to give all sorts of excuses, such as being busy grinding, questing, or even bringing a lady around to sightsee. Some even claimed to be heading to Baishi City to collect more Whitestone Dust after depleting their stock in that last engagement.

Deep Waters was on the verge of breaking down as he shouted, “Don’t you all understand?! Many players from Yunduan City are doing ‘Bounty Mission’ at this moment, and the players on top of the Wanted Players list are mostly our men, so each of them is being sent directly to prison!”

Everyone quickly understood the severity of the situation, and the ensuing discussion was something even Deep Waters had not thought of.

“These guys can pick up our bounties, but we can’t do the same to them!”

“Why’s that?”

“Don’t you know the rules governing the Wanted Players list? If none of them registered their account in Linyin City, we would have to head to the Overall Wanted Players list and pick them up. How are we gonna know which of them are the ones we’re supposed to target?” someone asked.

“Haven’t they registered their accounts in Linyin City yet?”

This question floated in Deep Waters’ mind. Did the enemies register their accounts in Linyin City yet?

Conventional logic dictated that they must have done that. Otherwise, they would be really inconvenienced if anything untoward happened. However, at the moment, there were plenty of underlying connotations to this question. If the enemies were doing ‘Bounty Mission’ without registered first, it was likely they

had done so intentionally.

This also meant that the current situation was not purely coincidental when one considered the sequence of events that had occurred. Rather, this might be an entirely sinister ploy that the enemies had set into motion. If this was the case, it would be truly frightening, as they would be doing their utmost to send as many of Deep Waters' guildmates into prison before withdrawing Prisoner Todd from it and subsequently leaving from Linyin City. Such a plan would truly be cunning and devious!

Deep Waters actually had a pretty good grasp of Oathless Sword and his army's movement. He knew that their side had already put Todd into prison for safekeeping for the night. In fact, this was the main reason for both parties temporary truce.

With the target not around, leading his men to completely wipe out Yunduan City's players would be useless. The enemies could easily leave the city now that it was over and leave the quest target Todd still locked up in prison. Since Deep Waters had no permission or means to retrieve the NPC, this would essentially end in quest failure for both parties. Hence, Deep Waters had called for the immediate cessation of attacks on Yunduan City's players after Prisoner Todd had been brought behind the safety of Linyin City's prison.

However, by the looks of things, the battle had yet to stop, as the enemies were perhaps utilizing this system rule to secretly enact their plan against Deep Waters' guild. This particular plan that Yunduan City's players were enacting had actually relegated Deep Waters and his guildmates into a passive role. As long as the enemies did not register their accounts to this city, they would have no way of retaliating to them. It was truly a pity that most of his guildmates bearing high PK value were Mages that also happened to be disadvantageous at one-versus-one PvP.

A whole host of reasons and factors made Deep Waters believe that they were in deep sh*t, yet all he could do was to hurry his

men on the guild channel. Lending the guild's Mages a hand to clear their PK value was the key to solving this situation, and more importantly, it would protect their Mages from being hunted. Deep Waters carefully picked out five Mages and messaged them, but his face turned ashen when he discovered that two out of the five were already in a 'non-serviceable region'. As for the remaining three, one had a PK value of 1 point, another had none, and the other had a PK value of 7 points. This last person was currently frantically calling for people to come to his aid!

"Mages with PK value above 3 points, report your coordinates and find the nearest comrade – the more the merrier. Head over to the Bounty Assignment Hall together once you're done!" Deep Waters arranged this as he walked toward the Bounty Assignment Hall. He saw Sword Demon's group happily entering the hall and Svelte Dancer quickly bounding out of it. He even saw quite a few familiar faces from today's battle. He also saw Drifting, who was waving toward him in greeting.

Deep Waters headed over to him. Drifting and one of his companions had just walked out of the Bounty Assignment Hall.

"You look busy. Where's Left Hand?" Deep Waters asked. Drifting's two companions were Left Hand of Love and Right Hand of Cool. Whoever heard their names would never ever forget them.

"I'm Left Hand of Love..." The Fighter beside Drifting answered with obvious discontent.

"Oh... Where's Right Hand, then?" Deep Waters asked. He might have a deep impression of the two men, but he could not really differentiate between them.

"You guys killed him," Drifting answered.

"Ahem... Quest. It's the quest," Deep Waters explained sheepishly.

"I know." Drifting chuckled as he said, "We're about to do quests,

as well.”

“Hold up!” Deep Waters had let them past in the end, as the question he had wanted to ask remained stuck in his throat. This was when Sword Demon and the others came out of the Bounty Assignment Hall after obtaining their bounties. The four were still chatting and laughing, not caring for the world or anyone beside them, when they found Deep Waters right outside the entrance to their surprise.

“Why are you here?!” The four men began looking all around them warily.

“Uhm... I’ve got something on, so I won’t be able to accompany you guys!” Deep Waters said, instead.

“Oh, you’re busy!” Three men stated, as the last man, Royal God Call, looked visibly distraught. “Then, who’s gonna lead me around?”

Sword Demon kindly passed his Windchaser’s Emblem to Royal God Call. “This should at least ease half of your burden.”

“Thank you!” The pale-faced Royal God Call took it and began his journey.

“Do what you have to do, then.” The other three men bid Deep Waters farewell before each leaving separately.

Deep Waters really wanted an answer to the question boggling his mind, yet it was truly not an easy question to ask. As such, he could only do his best to read everyone’s expression and reaction to find out whether there was really an underlying plan to this. However, if this was indeed a plan that that person had hatched up, it was highly probable for these men to be clueless about their role in it. This would be absolutely in line with how that despicable man did things.

Should I catch the ball before the bound?

These four men were surely apex experts of Yunduan City, and

there was still Drifting. He could still make out his figure in the distance. These five experts were heading in different directions, and all their backs were facing him right now. His comrades were already on their way as well. Should he take this chance to launch a sneak attack on them?

Deep Waters clenched his fists so much so that the white of his knuckles could be seen. Right now, his guildmates already spotted him and were all now gazing at him.

Chapter 343 - A Tragedy

One step, two steps, three steps... Sword Demon and the others were walking further and further away from the Bounty Assignment Hall. Deep Waters' mind was in turmoil as his inner demon and angel vied for control. In the end, he was just not merciless enough to order an ambush on these five experts.

It's still up for debate whether these men are clearing their PK value for themselves or if there is an underlying plot involved, Deep Waters told himself. Although he felt that his actions were not daring and resolute enough, this was only because the quest required him to cross swords with his friends. Such an event was something he was also unhappy about.

Thus, Deep Waters did not say a word while all his guildmates had their eyes on him. Four out of the five mercenaries turned a corner and disappeared from their line of sight, leaving just Royal God Call alone by the intersection. Walking to the left for a few steps before turning back right for several more, Royal God Call took out his booklet to record something. Royal God Call's pale face betrayed his fear.

This was Royal God Call's most pitiful moment. Deep Waters could no longer bear the sight and turned to look at his guildmates, instead. "What are you guys looking at? Go clear out your PK points if you've still got them!"

The players exchanged glances as they asked each other, "Do you have any?"

Several of them stepped out, but their PK value was only at 1 or 2 points, so they were not in a hurry to clear them. They figured their PK points would gradually disappear after staying up tonight and did not see the point of risking their lives doing 'Bounty Mission'.

Don't tell me that those with high PK value have already been

sent to prison! Deep Waters anxiously thought as he started assigning players to help clear off the PK points of those who had them.

Players who went in to pick up bounties told Deep Waters, “It seems that they’ve not registered their accounts in Linyin City yet, since the top bounty on the Wanted Players list doesn’t have high PK value. Logically speaking, it’s unlikely that they will have that low.”

Deep Waters refuted this. “They did not attempt to wipe us out in a wave like we did, so their PK value won’t be so concentrated. Besides, our losses are just not as heavy as theirs.”

Deep Waters’ comrades readily accepted his assessment.

“How many men did we lose tonight? Anyone with a detailed break down?” Deep Waters asked.

“Over a hundred of us lost levels!”

“Only over a hundred? So little?” Deep Waters was shocked.

This was when the players curiously stared at Deep Waters. “Of course. It’s their fault for bringing a bunch of mercenaries, too. Otherwise, why would we have players dropping by a whole level?”

“Oh!” Deep Waters exclaimed. He then hit his head in deep regret.

In competitive quests, guild members directly associated with the quests would not accrue PK points when they clashed with one another, and their deaths would only result in a 20% experience loss. When they first obtained this quest, not one of them knew that it was a competitive quest and only learned of this fact when they saw the players from Yunduan City with their target. That was when Deep Waters and his men added two and two together and thought of the rules governing such quests. Somehow, he had forgotten about all this. This was probably because he had become

the first casualty on their side, and his experience loss from that death was exceptionally high.

Deep Waters was instantly in tears when he thought of this.

He felt very foolish now for actually being grateful to Gu Fei insta-killing him earlier. Recalling Oathless Sword's anger due to his teasing, Deep Waters was certain that the man's tolerance must have been at its very limit. Deep Waters was very moved when the Mage seized that opportunity to swiftly execute him. In retrospect, however....

"F*CK YOUR ANCESTORS!" Deep Waters bellowed and beat his chest in anguish right by the Bounty Assignment Hall's entrance. He would have only lost 20% of his experience had he died under Oathless Sword's torture. Instead, Deep Waters had lost about 195% of his experience thanks to Gu Fei's interference, making his loss almost ten times more than what it could have been.

He felt really agonized by how unlucky he was. For him to have completely forgotten about the rule, had that guy also forgotten about it? Thinking back to that situation earlier, Deep Waters felt that he had already found the answer. Coincidentally, right by the corner of the street ahead, Oathless Sword and the remaining mercenary leaders emerged and walked toward his direction. When these men saw Deep Waters and his men, they were all very shocked.

Deep Waters did not spare a moment of thought and just rushed toward them with his guildmates in tow.

Oathless Sword, who was walking at the front of the group, naturally blanched in surprise. The enemies currently held numerical superiority over them. And while these people around him were his to command, without any underlings to do their bidding... Moreover, as a Warrior, he could not escape even if he wanted to!

Their enemies should not attack them at their current state...

That was the conclusion that they had come to in their just-concluded short discussion!

Did they make a mistake in their judgment? Were their enemies foolish that they did not realize this fact?

Thinking of this, Oathless Sword hurriedly barked out a reminder. “You dare attack us? Do you not want us to retrieve your target from the prison or something?”

Deep Waters did not even look at him, though, and only raised a finger toward his direction. “I’m not looking for you. Go where you want and stay there for all I care!”

Oathless Sword was incensed, but what could he say to that? This man had brought over a hundred players! He could only blame himself for not bringing his men with him as well. What a huge misstep on his part.

Deep Waters walked up to them and quickly dragged Young Master Han to one side. Looking backward and seeing his men following him closely, he hurriedly cried out, “What are you still following me for? Go and clean your rap sheet already!”

Everyone was stunned, and someone awkwardly asked, “Are we not killing them?” as he pointed to Oathless Sword and the other mercenary leaders that they had already surrounded.

“Kill them, my *ss! What’s our quest? What use is there to killing them now? Go and do what you’re supposed to do.” Deep Waters dismissed his men before cursing Young Master Han, “You’re a jerk!”

Young Master Han rolled his eyes before turning to address Yunduan City’s dumbfounded leaders, “You guys go ahead without me. I’ll be there in a while; I just need to speak with his madman first.”

Although they were curious on what the two would talk about, standing by the side to eavesdrop was just really embarrassing, so

they could only take their leave.

“Did you suggest all this, you jerk?!” Deep Waters immediately started lambasting Young Master Han once the audience from both sides left.

“What did I suggest?” Young Master Han asked innocently.

“Drop the act.”

Young Master Han continued to shrug with that innocent expression on his face, though.

Thus, Deep Waters could only narrate the tragedy that had befallen him in a tone of disgust, concluding, “You’re the only capable of coming up with such a despicable act.”

“He he he... So that’s what this is about.” Young Master Han chuckled warmly.

“What’s so funny?!” Deep Waters raged.

“Honestly speaking, I have nothing to do with that. He only did that out of kindness. I dare say that he probably doesn’t know anything about that particular rule’s existence. Even if he did, I’m sure he did not think of that, either. That guy’s a total gaming noob,” Young Master Han said.

“Gaming noob? Stop pulling my leg!” Deep Waters did not dare believe it! A gaming noob captured him alive, a gaming noob nearly single-handedly disrupted his street ambush... How was he going to live this down if word got out about it?

“He really is a noob. This game mode just happens to suit him,” Young Master Han insisted.

“What do you mean?” Deep Waters asked.

“He claims he’s proficient in kung fu,” Young Master Han replied.

“Kung fu? Are there still people out there dabbling in that kind of stuff?” Deep Waters was skeptical.

Young Master Han shrugged once more. “I don’t know, but his skill is no joke. But besides that, his knowledge regarding MMOs is nearly nonexistent.”

“Where did such an abnormality come from?!” Deep Waters muttered to himself, unaware that he had already released Young Master Han.

“I’m really sorry about today!” Young Master Han tidied his clothes before saying.

“Whoa. Did I mishear you? Are you even someone capable of apologizing?” Deep Waters reacted as though he had just witnessed the most frightening thing.

“This apology is for offending you more afterward,” Young Master Han calmly said.

Deep Waters instantly became wary. “Did you come up with a devious plan to counter our scheme?”

“Take a guess.” Young Master Han smiled warmly.

“I’ve decided to silence you,” Deep Waters suddenly said.

“That’s not your style.” Young Master Han patted him on his shoulders. “I’m leaving. Sit tight and wait for your death!”

Deep Waters clenched his fists until his knuckles turned white. Against this bad person, there was absolutely no need to be merciful! He should start with Double Shot from this angle, follow it up with Snipe, then Power Shot, and finally Homing Projectile to kill this b*st*rd. Deep Waters was a man who was quick to repay gratitude and swift to exact vengeance. Suddenly, he sped up and dove toward Young Master Han.

Young Master Han turned to look backward when he heard the hurried footsteps behind him and was shocked to see Deep Waters rushing toward him so aggressively, “What are you—”

“There are Thieves!” Deep Waters conveyed with as few words as

he could. At the very same moment he dashed toward Young Master Han, he released a handful of Whitestone Dust toward the right of Young Master Han.

He used plenty of Whitestone Dust with this toss, effectively interrupting the two Thieves who were now caught in a fit of cough.

“Dodge quickly!” By the time Deep Waters shouted this, Young Master Han had already stepped to the side at the sight of the Thieves.

“Are they not your men?” Young Master Han could not think of anyone else besides Deep Waters and his guild that would go against or even plan to attack Traversing Four Seas and the others in this foreign city.

“What nonsense,” Deep Waters said dismissively.

These two Thieves did not seem to be strangers to the Whitestone Dust. After waving their hands to disperse the cloud of dust that had formed, the two of them tightly gripped their daggers and gave chase with Fleetfoot.

“Into the jungle!” Deep Waters shouted to Young Master Han as he fired off an arrow. This shot he fired differed from the usual shots Archers would fire as he was not aiming for the enemy’s face but was instead targeting the sole of his foot.

A clanking sound could be heard when the arrow connected, as a trap sprang forth from the ground and bit down on the player’s ankle.

“Snare Shot. Bet you haven’t seen anything like that before, eh?” Deep Waters savored the Thief’s expression of shock as he said this. He then turned to fire an arrow toward the other Thief. This man had quite the agile reaction, instantly halting his steps when he saw an arrow fly toward him. In the end, that fired-off arrow was just a normal one that embedded itself in front of his foot. The

man leaped to the side for fear of the arrow suddenly turning into a trap and snaring him.

Deep Waters, who had already distanced himself by a few meters, sniggered when he turned back and saw the man's look of panic.

Chapter 344 - Own Backyard

Deep Waters faced forward once more and saw that Young Master Han had already run into the jungle, clearly making the move before being reminded by him.

“That jerk; he’s really quick on the uptake!” Deep Waters mumbled under his breath as he chased over. The two Thieves behind him were only momentarily stunned by the trap he had fired off. In fact, one of them was only hoodwinked and was not even ensnared. As for the other man, his leg that got trapped was already freed from it. Evidently, the duration of the trap for Deep Waters’ Snare Shot did not last very long.

Several steps inside the jungle, Deep Waters spotted Young Master Han leaning hard against a tree. He dove behind another tree as he whispered, “They’re here.”

“There are only two of them; can’t you take care of them?” Young Master Han asked. It was natural for a Priest like him to have difficulty contending with others, but Deep Waters was considered as one of the Five Unyielding Experts. Even if he lost a level after Gu Fei had slain him, others would deride him if he could not even take care of two Thieves.

“It’s not just two!” Deep Waters explained.

“Who are they?” Young Master Han asked.

“F*ck. How would I know? They’re obviously after you!” Deep Waters exclaimed.

“Isn’t this your backyard?”

“I don’t recognize them. Haven’t seen them before as well,” Deep Waters replied.

“Have they caught up yet?”

“Of course!” Deep Waters suddenly turned and circled round the

other direction as he fired two arrows with Double Shot.

“D*MM*T!” A voice from within the jungle growled. It clearly belonged to a man who had gotten struck by the arrows. Deep Waters ducked behind the tree once more as he quickly peeked out from the other side and took another shot. Not a curse was heard this time. Deep Waters leaned close to the tree as his ears pricked to pick up any sound but did not hear even a footstep.

At the moment, both parties were rather close to one another. The jungle floor was filled with detritus, so it was not easy for anyone to walk through it without making a sound. It was obvious that the enemies had stopped moving for now.

Young Master Han gestured for Deep Waters to provide him intel on the number of enemies that they were facing.

Deep Waters lifted four fingers. He had caught sight of five players running into the jungle the moment he peeked out, but the two arrows he had fired off targeted only one player. Therefore, one of them was already taken care of. One thing he was certain was that the enemies had already noted his position and were most likely preparing to conduct a sneak attack on him.

Peep, the Hunter skill he had was specially used to counter Stealth. However, he could only sense the players when they were in Stealth. The enemies right now were not using Stealth and were instead just carefully closing in on him, so the skill was essentially useless.

Deep Waters made a quick gesture to Young Master Han and the latter nodded tacitly. Counting to three in his heart, Young Master Han suddenly revealed himself from behind the tree and used the Priest’s weak Holy Ball to attack one of the enemies.

Although no one would treat a Priest’s attack seriously, his sudden appearance nevertheless attracted everyone’s attention. Deep Waters took this chance to instantly bound out and hide himself behind another tree. The enemies did not know that their

momentary shift of attention had been exploited by Deep Waters. Deep Waters had already changed his position by the time they turned to look at the tree he had been hiding before Young Master Han's diversion.

The enemies' eyes were not on Deep Waters' new hiding spot. When he peeked his head out from behind the tree, he saw two players quickly heading over to where Young Master Han was, while the other two continued to close in on the position he had previously been hiding. Deep Waters unhesitatingly ducked out half his body with a drawn bow and fed Snipe to one of the two players creeping over to Young Master Han.

This unexpected arrow caused the four men to panic once more. They did not even consider that this attack was from the same player from before who had managed to change his position, but was instead convinced that it was from a third player who was also hidden in this jungle.

They subconsciously believed that if there was a third player, then there could possibly be a fourth, fifth, sixth... The four men no longer dared to act with undue consideration as they conscientiously gathered together.

Deep Waters took this chance to peek out and use Appraisal on the four players' job class. The enemies were all Thieves. This made him feel more reassured, since he would at least be able to maintain his ranged superiority over them. He fired another shot when he revealed himself, yet the player he had shot with Snipe before was unfortunately no longer within his attack range, so Deep Waters could only choose another target. He even daringly ran out from his position after shooting. When he turned around to look, he saw the men closely taking note of his movement and searching for hiding spots themselves. They appeared to have no intention of actively chasing after him.

"Heh... Not falling for it, eh!" Deep Waters sighed. This act of hiding meant that they had given up the initiative to attack. Now

that Deep Waters held the initiative, he boldly weaved about the trees and quickly circled around where those men were hiding.

Seeing his target looking all over, unaware of the danger looming next to him, Deep Waters could only sigh as he mercilessly fired off an arrow to finish off this player.

I'm afraid these guys aren't from Linyin City... Deep Waters concluded in his mind. Linyin City's players were experts when it came to jungle guerilla warfare, only death awaited anyone who would hide behind a tree and assume that they were safe.

As he was thinking of this, Deep Waters traversed through the jungle and was now behind another enemy. This time, however, just as he had fully drawn his bow and was about to fire, this man's figure suddenly became transparent.

Stealth! Deep Waters thought as he hurriedly released his arrow. Once the enemy's Stealth was broken, the man hurriedly turned around to find out who had ambushed him. Deep Waters decided against hiding as he fired off an arrow straight to the man's head. It was too late for this man to evade this shot and he disappeared with an arrow stuck on his butt.

"Hey! Are you dead yet?" Deep Waters sent Young Master Han this message. They had already added each other as friends during their meeting in the tavern.

"I'm immortal," Young Master Han replied.

"The enemies are now in Stealth mode," Deep Waters warned him.

"Got it!" Young Master Han answered. In the next second, Deep Waters watched as Young Master Han dash out from his hiding spot, looking particularly unhurried in the eyes of an Agility-based job class. However, he knew that that was the maximum movement speed a Priest could do, and it was a speed that most Thieves in Stealth would have trouble catching up to.

“That’s so cunning.” Deep Waters sighed. Young Master Han’s action directly tapped into the weakness of the Thieves, as their movement speed while in Stealth was not good enough to catch up to anyone. Despite this, Deep Waters still had to give Young Master Han’s coordinates, “Run here!”

Young Master Han, who was weaving through the jungle, abruptly turned to run in the precise direction he had indicated. Deep Waters could not help but whisper, “Having a firm grasp of coordinates to this degree, why didn’t he offer to help that guy with the nonexistent sense of direction do ‘Bounty Mission’, instead?”

When the Thieves in Stealth saw the Priest fleeing, they immediately canceled their Stealth and changed it to Fleetfoot to give chase, yet they were still a distance away from Young Master Han. Deep Waters calmly sent him another message: “If you can’t reach the coordinates in time, I won’t save you even if you come running to hug my thigh!”

Given Young Master Han’s ability to calculate precise distance and how coordinates intuitively came to him, he had long since realized the difficulty of reaching the coordinates Deep Waters had provided him with before those Thieves caught up to him, yet he remained unflustered in the least. He was a Priest, after all. Tossing a Heal or two on himself should be enough to sustain him through this short distance. With his superb skill control and his confidence with his Golden Ratio stat point distribution, any players intending to interrupt his spell-casting would face a similar level of difficulty as those players attempting to interrupt Gu Fei’s spell-casting.

By the time the Thieves caught up to Young Master Han at the position he had estimated that they would, he had already bestowed Heal on himself in preparation of their assault. Immediately turning his body round, Young Master Han waved toward Deep Waters’ direction. “Aren’t you attacking yet?”

The two Thieves reflexively turned their heads in the direction he had gestured to. Young Master Han actually casually caused them to look away once more with this act. As a result, that bit of damage he had been expecting to receive did not come and he was able to safely proceed to the coordinates Deep Waters had directed him to.

Deep Waters was of course going to strike, yet he did not do so immediately as he was looking forward to seeing Young Master Han take a little beating – a wish that seemed to more or less run in line with everyone who had met the latter.

This wish of his was somewhat fulfilled when two Thieves finally attacked Young Master Han when they managed to close in on him. Young Master Han did not dodge their attacks. Bestowing Heal on himself with exactitude, he bought time for himself as he stared at Deep Waters without saying a word or crying out for help.

Deep Waters did not say anything, either. Pulling his bow out as slowly as he could, he took an arrow out, nocked it on the bow, and drew the bow's string back. Release!

If only the arrow would fly slow, as well! Deep Waters thought to himself.

The two Thieves gritted their teeth and kept up their attacks, thinking that their combined efforts would be enough to kill off the Priest. It should be an easy enough task. Afterward, they would deal with the Archer, deciding on whether to kill or hide from him. Unfortunately for them, Young Master Han's Heal was perfectly bestowed each time, neither too late nor too soon, and he managed to maintain his HP with the greatest efficiency.

And just like that, the two Thieves eventually realized that it was their HP that had dropped to the red, while the Priest before them remained fine.

This was already Deep Waters purposely going easy on them. If

he had been concentrating his firepower on just one of them, they would not even be in a situation where both players' HP were in the red.

Knowing that they could not sustain this any longer, the two men quickly turned tail to run. They were hoping to recover their HP somewhere safe before deciding on their next step. However, this was when Deep Waters increased the pace of his attack and fired off Homing Projectile and Snipe on them.

That was how all the five Thieves who had delved into the jungle got killed off.

"Man, it's such a shame. Why aren't you dead?" Deep Waters kept his bow as he walked over.

"I'm just too skilled. I can't die even if I want to. I feel really bad, too," Young Master Han replied as he kept his staff.

"Who are those guys?" Deep Waters asked.

"I don't recognize any of them," Young Master Han answered.

"Why are they after you?" Deep Waters asked.

"I don't know either."

"They don't seem to be players from Linyin City," Deep Waters said.

"Are you sure?" Young Master Han asked.

"If they were from Linyin City, you would be dead already," Deep Waters said, instead.

Young Master Han did not pay heed to that last comment as he muttered, "If they're not from Linyin City but from somewhere near and a place I've visited, that only leaves Baishi City. Those people are from Baishi City... Hmm...."

A Chinese phrase that means to plead, beg, or depend on someone.

Chapter 345 - This is really the end

“Do you know who’s after you?” Deep Waters asked Young Master Han.

Young Master Han nodded his head. “It should be them.”

“Them? How many are we talking about here?” Deep Waters asked.

“I’m not too sure. Anyway, there are surely more of them than just the two of us,” Young Master Han said.

Deep Waters poked his head out from behind the tree and looked around. “Currently, there don’t seem to be any other players in the jungle.”

“Let’s leave and walk around for a bit.” The two men said this same line as they came out from behind their respective trees. They were only at the edge of the jungle, so they quickly found themselves back in Linyin City after walking a short distance. Quite a few players were gathered ahead, and they were currently pointing toward the jungle. The two of them immediately hid behind a tree on the left and right. Deep Waters asked, “Are they the ones after you?”

Young Master Han cautiously craned his neck to get a good look at those people and nodded. “Yup.”

When Young Master Han saw the man standing at the forefront of the group beyond the jungle, he immediately identified him as the leader of the remnants of the eradicated Past Deeds Guild in Baishi City: the Mage Blue Ease.

Blue Ease was not privy to Young Master Han’s plan after losing to Dusky Cloud in a game of rock-paper-scissors yesterday in Baishi City, but he was not the least bit bothered by missing out on it, as he did not care for Young Master Han’s help. Back then, he was only clashing with Dusky Cloud as usual, and his decision on

whether to pursue Silver Moon or not was unaffected by the outcome of the child's game.

Simply put, he had no intention of giving up the chase at all.

The hatred of these former members of Past Deeds for Silver Moon eclipsed that which Dusky Cloud and his comrades had. It was in such an intense atmosphere that a swarm of men had rallied to participate in this hunt for their ex-guild leader. After inquiring the next stop of those players from Yunduan City, they made sure to arrive at Linyin City before the expedition in hopes of seizing a good chance to ambush Silver Moon within the city. With how difficult it was to locate Silver Moon, these men secretly decided that no matter which corner of this world Silver Moon fled to, they would give chase just so they could ruthlessly finish him off.

Unfortunately, Silver Moon had already been sent back to Baishi City halfway through their journey toward Linyin City. Neither Blue Ease nor his men were cognizant of this as they continued to wait like fools in Linyin City. Naturally, they also had no idea that Traversing Four Seas and Deep Waters' guild were poised to clash in a competitive quest. When they finally spotted the players from Yunduan City, Oathless Sword and everyone else were in the middle of fleeing from that street fight and escorting Prisoner Todd to the prison for night's safekeeping.

While they did not know what had happened, Blue Ease and his men were happy and sad when the originally thousand-man army got reduced to their current number. They were happy because fewer players meant they would be easier to contend with, but they were sad because they were uncertain if Silver Moon was among those players who had perished.

In the end, before they could begin their investigation, news came from Baishi City. Those few men who had stayed behind in Baishi City had spotted Silver Moon being surrounded by Dusky Cloud's men brought when they were about to log off in the Knights' Barracks.

Evidently, this revelation had left them all dispirited now that this trip had turned out to be for naught. Some logged off, others prepared to return to Baishi City, while a handful of them visited a local tavern for a short session. It was this last group that had coincidentally spotted Deep Waters and the five members of Young Master's Elite.

Most men from Past Deeds were not familiar with the men of Young Master's Elite, but several of them would still be able to recognize Young Master Han, given his outstanding appearance.

Blue Ease got excited when he learned of this just as he was preparing to leave for Baishi City. This trip would not be a total waste if he could kill Young Master Han just once. At the very least, it would be an enjoyable endeavor. Young Master Han was, after all, among those responsible for the collapse of Past Deeds, so his hatred for the man was deep-seated as well!

As former residents of Yueye City, they were adept at PvPing, so they did not waste much time in getting everything prepared. Setting up an ambush team by the Priest Academy, the players in the tavern continued to keep a close eye on their new target's movement.

When Young Master's Elite departed from the tavern, the players stalking Young Master Han were pleasantly surprised to see him separate from the others. Unfortunately, they did not have too many players following Young Master Han just then. They wanted to ascertain that Young Master Han was truly isolated from the rest before acting. It would not be a stretch for Yunduan City's players to come to Young Master Han's aid just as they were staging an ambush to the Priest with a handful of men.

Thus, these men tailed Young Master Han as he got further and further away from his friends. But before they could strike, Young Master Han suddenly took a turning from the street and congregated with another group of players.

Instead of the other experts from Young Master's Elite, Young Master Han met up with the other leaders from Yunduan City... Just a quick Appraisal was all they needed to realize that this lot of players was strong as well, once more causing Blue Ease and his men to shelf their plan to ambush him.

Blue Ease's men could only watch this group of players chat all the way until they reached the Bounty Assignment Hall. This was when another opportunity presented itself. Young Master Han once more separated from the group and stayed with just one friend. Soon, the two said their goodbyes to each other as well.

The ex-members of Past Deeds no longer wished to miss out on this chance.

They had previously stalled their ambush in hopes of the other members of Young Master's Elite getting further away from Young Master Han, but the man had met up with another group by the time they moved to strike. In order to not repeat such a scenario, the Thieves went in Stealth and moved in toward their target.

In the end, Deep Waters detected their movement and allowed Young Master Han to escape into the jungle with him. These former Past Deeds members figured they could still salvage the situation since they were only up against two players, so the five Thieves present went into the jungle to give chase, yet they were all eliminated one after another by Deep Waters. By the time Blue Ease and the others made it to the place, not one of their comrade Thieves remained, so they were now clueless on where Young Master Han had escaped to.

"Big Blue, shall we go in and take a look again?" a comrade asked.

Blue Ease was a little hesitant. Quite some time had passed since they struck at Young Master Han. If the man had called for reinforcement, they would have surely arrived by now. He did not have many men with him at the moment, so they would absolutely be helpless if they were to clash with Yunduan City's largest guild

like this.

“Let’s just go all out; what’s there to be afraid of?” the hot-blooded way of Yueye City reared its head once more.

Blue Ease gritted his teeth for a while. Just as he was about to order his comrades to charge in, he suddenly received a message. He stood there in a daze for a moment when he read through it. All the doubts, the hesitation, and even the rage disappeared as a look of beatific surprise overcame him.

“Let’s go!” Blue Ease turned and waved his arm.

“What?” Everyone was nonplussed.

“Vast Lushness is also here; someone spotted her!” Blue Ease happily exclaimed.

“Ah!” The former Past Deeds members were thrilled when they heard this.

“Wow! The legendary Vast Lushness.” Some of the players present were new acquaintances Blue Ease had picked up from Baishi City. They were no strangers to this IGN since Blue Ease and the other former Past Deeds’ members were full of praises for this honorable woman.

“Let’s go!” The group quickly departed. Meeting a friend far outstripped that of killing an enemy to them.

“Eh. They’ve all left.” Deep Waters and Young Master Han were still hiding in the jungle and were too far to hear what those men had said. The two had taken turns peeking out from behind their cover to observe the enemies’ movement. It happened to be Deep Waters’ turn to check, so he was the one who had discovered their enemies’ departure.

“All of them?” Young Master Han was stunned as well. This action was entirely unlike the behavior of players who had once lived in Yueye City. These men were not the sort to easily give up whenever they targeted someone – unless the thousand-man army

of Yunduan City was standing before them. This was definitely not the case right now, though. The absence of the army itself would be reason enough for them to try and eliminate him.

“They’ve really left.” Deep Waters boldly stepped out from behind the tree. If the enemies were still around, this act alone would expose Deep Waters and Young Master Han’s hiding place.

Not one sound or movement could be detected.

“Their departure’s a little strange.” Young Master Han could not make sense of this.

“Perhaps, they have something on?” Deep Waters suggested.

“What could be more important than killing me?” Young Master Han flipped the question back at Deep Waters.

Deep Waters gritted his teeth. Was there even a limit to this man’s narcissism? Not everything was about him.

The two men did not let their guard down completely as they warily exited the jungle. They only believed that the enemies had truly left when nothing untoward happened to them even after making their way out.

“Did any of your enemies put a huge bounty on your head?” Deep Waters asked Young Master Han when he suddenly heard voices. Just as he was about to tell Young Master Han to hide, the owners of those voices came around the corner. Deep Waters relaxed when he realized that these men were the mercenaries of Young Master's Elite.

“Doesn’t that person we just passed by seem like a member of the eradicated Past Deeds?” Royal God Call was asking.

“Seems like it. I feel as though I’ve seen him in Yueye City before.” Brother Assist nodded.

“Heh... You guys came a little too late. Everything’s fine now.” Deep Waters waved to them. He figured Young Master Han must

have called these men to rescue him from their predicament moments ago.

“Where’s Sword Demon? Why isn’t he here?” Deep Waters asked them as he neared the three men.

They looked at Deep Waters a little strangely before looking over to Young Master Han.

“I didn’t call him,” Young Master Han answered his question, instead.

“Why?” Deep Waters asked.

“Actually, these three aren’t here to save me. They’re here for you,” Young Master Han explained.

“Me? What for?” Deep Waters asked.

“You’ve got a PK value of 5 points, right?” Young Master Han smiled warmly.

“What the—you’re despicable!” Deep Waters finally realized what was going on, cursing as he quickly attempted to dive back into the jungle again. He knew that these people before him were apex experts and was positive that he would be in quite the pickle if he did not make it into the jungle and properly leverage on his greatest advantage with that terrain.

“Sorry, Deep Waters bro!” War Without Wounds inhaled a deep breath as he used Charge at him. Brother Assist also moved to his flank, as Royal God Call, who had the fastest movement, ran straight towards the tree line, hoping to block Deep Waters from making it into the jungle. Even Young Master Han did not stand by idly as he tossed two liquor bottles straight at Deep Waters.

Suddenly, Deep Waters changed direction and lunged toward War Without Wounds. War Without Wounds was entirely unprepared for his move and his claymore struck Deep Waters by the waist. Seeing the Hunter fly outward, he immediately cried out, “Oh, no!”

The Charge that connected with Deep Waters sent him sliding out fast. There was only one thought in his mind as he sailed through the air: Please don't send me to a Dizzy state.

The Dizzy state did not get triggered. Deep Waters delightedly scrambled to his feet, hoping to dive right in the depths of the jungle, when a red figure appeared before him from behind a tree. Deep Waters was no longer a stranger to this figure.

"You're really finished this time." Svelte Dancer tittered as she lifted her hand and her dagger surged out, taking out Deep Waters before he could fully straighten his back.

"I'll go visit you!" Young Master Han quickly sent Deep Waters this message right before he disappeared. The system did not reject it. "Yup. He's sure to see it!" Young Master Han nodded his head.

Chapter 346 - Prison Visit

Silence descended by the edge of the forest as Svelte Dancer came strolling out from the tree line after finishing off Deep Waters. She waved to Young Master Han to indicate that she had done the deed.

Young Master Han nodded his head back in acknowledgement and looked at the other three men with him as they regarded him back.

“What are you staring at me for? Go resume whatever you’re doing.” Young Master Han dismissed them with a wave of his hand.

The three then left separately. Young Master Han rummaged through the items in his dimensional pocket, and he found several bottles of liquor. Immediately heading toward the prison, he sent Oathless Sword this message: “Quickly gather everyone to depart for the next stop.”

“What? Why?” Oathless Sword asked.

“The enemies’ boss will be serving time in prison for the next ten hours. If we don’t seize this chance to leave now, do you really want to be continually harassed by them as we journey through the jungle tomorrow?” Young Master Han asked.

Oathless Sword’s eyes instantly shone. Since characters in MMOs would not truly die, and given how they could contact their friends via the messaging system, defeating the enemies by taking down the leader was not really a viable tactic in games. However, throwing the leader in prison would completely cut him off from contacting his men. This classic tactic employable in war suddenly became useful once more.

“Ten hours, hmm. There’s no rush, then. Let’s wait till those guys from Baishi City return before we leave!” Oathless Sword

said. Although some mercenaries that had respawned in Baishi City after losing their lives in their trek through the jungle withdrew from this mission, quite a number of them had decided to continue and were currently making their way toward Linyin City to rendezvous with them.

“It’s best to seize what time we have. Don’t forget; the prison allows players to pay for a visitation. He can still manually command his men, albeit it would be rather cumbersome,” Young Master Han said.

“You’re right. But we don’t have that many players with us right now. Even if the enemies don’t have Deep Waters with them now...” Oathless Sword still had his reservations.

“Both parties are in a very similar situation right now. They have men that went offline to rest just like we do. We won’t be too far off when it comes to the headcount. The crux here is to capitalize on this chance when Deep Waters isn’t around. I suggest you hurry up before this window of opportunity closes,” Young Master Han reasoned.

Oathless Sword was aware that dragging his feet would likely be his downfall in this situation. Since they were already in such a quagmire, how much worse could it get from here on? With that thought in mind, Oathless Sword gritted his teeth and decisively seized this opportunity. He immediately called for his guild members that were still online and informed each mercenary leader to prepare for departure.

Oathless Sword was a leader of a large guild, so he did not need Young Master Han to walk him through all this. Young Master Han successfully convinced Oathless Sword about departing with haste from Linyin City at the same time he reached Linyin City’s prison. After paying the exorbitant visiting fee, he entered the prison.

Not many players persevered to continue their stint through the dead of night. Many of them were even asleep in-game – probably

in hopes of replenishing their need for sleep in reality while shaving off their prison sentence. This method was something game officials did not approve of. By their words, although the game allowed players to mimic sleep, and it would indeed allow them to achieve the necessary rapid eye movement sleep, their recovery from physical fatigue was entirely dependent on their resting posture in reality even if they simulated a sleeping posture in Parallel World.

Thus, sleeping in-game often gave players sore backs and strained necks, and that feeling was not a virtual sensation but an actual signal that their real body was giving. Such sensations from their real body would not be in the least bit reduced while they were fully immersed in the game. The game company did not wish for people to die due to mistakenly attributing the pain that they were feeling to sneak attack performed by other players instead of it being caused by actual life-and-death situations in reality.

With regard to sleeping, some asked if it was possible for players to connect to their VR gaming set while lying in bed.

The gaming officials' answer to this question: Such an act was tantamount to misusing the gaming set, so they could not be held liable for any resulting damage. Thus, players would rather bear the sore backs than risked damaging the gaming equipment since this VR equipment in reality was a hundred times more important than the best equipment in-game.

Seeing all the players lying all over the place in each cell, Young Master Han finally spotted Deep Waters alone in one of these cells, lying in a corner with his back facing the outside of the cell's confines.

"Hey. Are you facing the wall to reflect on your actions?" Young Master Han knocked on the cell door as he spoke.

Deep Waters slowly turned around, the displeasure evident on his face as he raged, "You jerk! You dare show you face here?!"

Young Master Han grinned cheekily, “Why won’t I? You should know by now how much I love seeing others in a situation like yours.”

Deep Waters was grinding his teeth as he cracked his knuckles threateningly. “Just you wait. I’ll show you what’s up once I get out of here.”

Young Master Han laughed before he lightly tossed a bottle of liquor toward the other.

This throw of his was very ingenious. If Deep Waters chose not to dodge it, that bottle would hit him square on his head; if he did dodge it, the bottle would shatter on the wall behind him and spill its content on him, the shards of glass might also even fly toward him. Thus, without any other options, Deep Waters could only reach out to grab it.

“F*ck me. Two-oh-oh, you’re really rich.” Deep Waters took the bottle and was about to throw it back when he read the label. This was the most expensive liquor available in game – a bottle that even Svelte Dancer would be unwilling to waste money on. There was no discernible benefit to drinking this alcohol in-game, after all.

Young Master Han did not respond to his comment, simply saying, “You’ll be out in ten hours’ time. Unfortunately, you won’t know where I’m gone by then. Speaking of which, I believe that the competitive quest you’re on is only limited to the region Linyin City is in. Do you have any idea on where’s our next stop?”

“It’s true, then? You really did plan to get me imprisoned, so you guys can abscond from the city without much hindrance...” Deep Waters said.

Unexpectedly, Young Master Han actually sighed. “I wished that were the case. It would be an absolutely exquisite plan if that were truly the case. Sadly, it was nothing but an idea that popped in my head at that very moment. I definitely did not arrange for those

men to hunt me like that. But, in the process of our escape, the PK value you were honored with instantly became the seed that sprouted this grand idea. Let us cheers to that great idea!"

Deep Waters' face was still black as not a word escaped from him. The only outlet for his pent-up rage was this bottle of liquor, which he brusquely took a long draw from. His actions and demeanor clearly sent this message to Young Master Han: He was only drinking by his accord and was surely not about to raise a glass to that.

Everyone could tell that Deep Waters only gained all those PK points because he had been helping Young Master Han. Even Deep Waters himself was vexed to mention this to Young Master Han, knowing full well that saying such things to the latter would not make the man remorseful or anything. In fact, Young Master Han was even likely to flip the script and reproach him for not separating personal and professional relationships – unclear of his position as he got himself confused at such a crucial moment.

D*mn. This was considered being confused? He could only blame himself for having a good conscience, not even thinking about it and just lending his hand the moment he saw someone being targeted. Who would be like this heartless cad, forever scheming and calculating, anyway?

This conversation Deep Waters had simulated in his mind had quite a bit of sense and basis behind it.

"Don't be so smug about this," Deep Waters said, adding, "Although I'm stuck here in prison. My comrades still aren't pushovers for you guys."

Young Master Han laughed. "You should be well aware of the limits of your comrades' capabilities."

Deep Waters was quiet. He unconsciously took another swig from that bottle of liquor in his hand. His comrades... He would not be their boss if they were stronger than him.

“Alright, it’s about time. I gotta go,” Young Master Han interrupted his pensive thoughts.

“I sincerely wish you an early death and reincarnation,” Deep Waters said.

“That’s not really possible. After all, you’re not dead and only stuck in prison. So how would I lose my life?” Young Master Han chuckled. “How are you feeling now?”

“What do you mean ‘how’?”

“Feeling a little dizzy?” Young Master Han asked.

“You... Did you spike my drink?” Now that Young Master Han had mentioned it, Deep Waters did indeed feel lightheaded.

“What a joke. There are no such drugs in the game.” Young Master Han laughed. “However, that liquor is the strongest out of all the available alcohols in this game. Instead of calling it ‘two-oh-oh’, you should call it ‘one-seven-oh’.”

“This isn’t the two-oh-oh?” Deep Waters stared at the bottle.

“Who told you the two-oh-oh bottle must contain the two-oh-oh? Alright, enough talk. Time to go to sleep!” Young Master Han waved his hand.

“You jerk...” Deep Waters groggily cursed as his legs gave way and he found himself on his knees. The bottle in his hand slipped, but it did not crash to the ground, and the bottle’s remaining content merely spilled out.

“You’ve got quite the tolerance to even finish half a bottle like that.” Deep Waters heard Young Master Han commending him as his vision dimmed. He saw Young Master Han take something out from his dimensional pocket and tossed it over to him. “The earnings we’ve got this time around are all thanks to you. Best you keep that properly. Don’t blame me if someone else pockets it.”

Young Master Han left after he said his piece. Deep Waters

wanted to check what the man had thrown him in his state of grogginess, but the alcohol he had drank in this fully immersive game finally got to him and he crumpled to the ground, fast asleep.

As Young Master Han strolled out the prison, he saw several players hurriedly rushing into it. He nonchalantly stepped aside and gave way to these men while he maintained a straight face. The lighting within the prison was already abysmal, so these men did not notice that someone else was visiting in their haste to make it deeper into the prison. As Young Master Han took his last step out of the prison, he heard urgent voices coming from those men, “Deep Waters, stop sleeping! Get up! Those guys seem to be leaving!”

Deep Waters did not hear them, though. He was too far in the cell for the men to reach him, so all they could do was pelt him with their miscellaneous items from their dimensional pockets. However, no matter how they pelted him, he did not rouse him from his stupor. They yelled and made so much noise that even the other players were disturbed from their sleep.

It was not easy to fall asleep in-game. These players really wished they could have slept through their entire sentence in one go, but they were instead so rudely awakened by these players’ din, so they felt absolutely disgruntled toward them. Soon enough, the entire prison was flooded with curses and expletives as everyone began to fling insults at each other. These players could only do this since they were unable to settle their disagreement physically.

Outside the prison, the players from Yunduan City were all neatly gathered together. Oathless Sword was rather surprised when he saw Young Master Han stroll out of the prison like he did.

“Let’s get going!” Young Master Han said.

“Our plan to leave will surely get exposed once everyone gathers.” Oathless Sword carefully looked around for any signs of Deep Waters’ men. “Deep Waters probably knows of our intention

by now, so he'll at the very least come up with a sort of plan. Let's quickly leave while he has difficulty relaying everything."

"He he... There's no need to rush. Deep Waters won't be able to do any commanding for at least the next half hour," Young Master Han said.

"Why?" Oathless Sword was perplexed.

"He's had too much to drink," Young Master Han calmly replied.

Chapter 347 - Taking Their Leave First

“Why are we suddenly continuing the expedition?” It was inevitable for the Yunduan City’s players to pose this question upon being gathered in haste.

“Because we only have this fleeting opportunity,” Oathless Sword’s solemn expression right now made him look like a timber wolf.

“What about the other comrades that aren’t here?” someone asked.

“We’ll tell them to make their way over once they come online tomorrow,” Oathless Sword answered.

“Where’s our next stop?” someone asked.

Oathless Sword looked all around him. Beckoning the player who had asked the question to him, he whispered, “Private chat.”

Curses came from all over.

“What’s going to happen to Miles?” Sword Demon and the rest of Young Master’s Elite were busy discussing this on their mercenary channel.

“Him? Can he even leave Linyin City? We’ll just be dragged down if we stay with him.” Young Master Han did not mince his words.

“So we’re just abandoning him here?” Royal God Call found this decision hard to accept.

“Perhaps, you can stay behind and aid him,” Young Master Han proposed.

“How am I gonna be of help?” Royal God Call asked.

Young Master Han shrugged his shoulders. Royal God Call was in deep contemplation.

Young Master Han finally said, “Fine. I really tried protecting

your self-esteem, but you're just asking for it, so I'll just give it to you all straight: You randoms are nothing but dead weight on him. Help him? Not weighing him down by following him around is the best contribution any of you can provide."

"F*cking hell, you're the random one! We're leaving." Royal God Call was the first to walk away with a huff.

"Royal, you're going the wrong way." Young Master Han dispassionately informed.

Thus, Royal God Call coolly turned one hundred eighty degrees and continued walking.

"Alright, let's go; let's go!" Most of the troops started moving onward. Although they appeared scattered, the players' positioning and the battalion's job-class composition were already properly formed to counter any ambush coming from all sides. The Archers even fired off arrows in every direction from time to time, hitting a few random players as a result. None of the unfortunate victims moved to berate their assailants, however. Who would be foolish enough to confront such a large battalion over a small matter, anyway?

They walked along the edge of Linyin City for a while, but no movement came from Deep Waters' camp. They would soon be entering the jungle; everyone looked calm on the surface as they bid each other to take care before diving right into the trees.

They advanced slowly but surely. Sakurazaka Moony's group took the lead to check for traps, while Warriors and Priests followed behind to protect the flanks.

The Mages tossed AOE spells around them whenever possible; Archers kept a constant stream of arrows flying toward the treetops. Although the arrows would just fall and pierce their men, no one complained; The Knights incessantly directed Blessing of Spirit on everyone to increase their magic defense; the Warriors busied themselves with shaking every tree they walked past;

finally, the Thieves patrolled the expedition's perimeter, performed reconnaissance, and acted as scouts. Everyone had their roles. Oathless Sword tasked all of them to quickly inform him of any enemy spotting or the loss of someone's life.

Once bitten, twice shy. Yunduan City players learned from their mistake and found a way to take precautionary measures against every trick and play that Deep Waters' camp had previously done to them on their journey through the jungle. There should not be any more problems this time, right?

Of course, there was none!

Deep Waters and his men were still around, yet quite a number went offline, and only some remained online.

Plenty of their Mages were currently serving time in prison, which greatly affected their combat might.

Moreover, Deep Waters was still in a drunken stupor. The others spent a long time arguing but failed to come up with a solid plan, so each of them ended up doing their thing. As a result, all of them were easily repelled by Yunduan City's players. The enemy team that was monitoring the expedition from behind never found a chance to strike and could only watch them escape from the jungle.

All sorts of feelings welled up in their hearts!

The moment the last player from Yunduan City stepped out of the jungle, everyone experienced a myriad of emotions that was too hard to describe. They were finally out of that ravenous jungle that had previously devoured plenty of their brothers and sisters.

"Beautifully done." Oathless Sword, who was beside Young Master Han, happily patted the latter's shoulder.

"Heh... I suppose you won't feel too exploited when you fish out your coin purse this time, right?" Young Master Han nonchalantly asked.

"Ha ha ha! You're making yourself seem like an outsider; what

“are you talking about money for?” Oathless Sword chuckled as he strode away. Indeed, the fee he had paid Young Master’s Elite this time around was truly worth it that it did not elicit a complaint from him. They had incurred heavy losses from the enemies’ vigorous assault the first time around and lost over half of their men; in comparison, their trek through the jungle this time was fairly smooth and risk-free. How could he not be elated?

He felt that every coin he spent was well deserved. He might have plenty of opinions, suspicions, and dissatisfaction about Young Master’s Elite before, but reality proved that the group was indeed a huge problem-solver for them; hiring them for this mission had been a wise choice. Oathless Sword even expressed his concern for the currently offline Gu Fei who did not managed to join them in their escape.

“Money? You’ve already gotten paid for this mission? Where is it, then?” Royal God Call, War Without Wounds, and the others looked at Young Master Han in shock once Oathless Sword left.

“I’ve already spent it all,” Young Master Han replied.

“On what?” The eyes of the two men widened.

“On Deep Waters. I gave it to him,” Young Master Han answered.

Their eyes returned to normal, but it was still open in disbelief. “All of it? You should at least leave some for us. We’ve done a bit of work, too!”

“Oh, please.” Young Master Han impatiently retorted, “The one who killed Deep Waters was Svelte Dancer. Did you guys see her come over to ask me for money? You two should learn a thing or two from that lady.”

“F*ck! Is she your average lady? She’s the richest player in the game!” The two showed Young Master Han their middle fingers. Young Master Han was truly too despicable. To actually tell these two to learn from the attitude the richest player had toward money

and achieve actualization....

“Alright, alright!” Oathless Sword, who was done basking in his happiness, began reminding all the players to rein in their celebration. “It’s getting late. If nothing unexpected happens, we should arrive at the next city in about three hours. It’s best if we seize this opportunity to be on our way!”

“Ohhh!” The players were all in high spirits.

“Those players from Linyin City may not easily give up their pursuit. Brother Sword Demon, bring a few Thieves with you and stay behind the pack in Stealth. Secretly keep watch for a while! All of you can return once we cover quite a distance without encountering any issues. What do you think?” Oathless Sword now felt that Young Master's Elite was the most dependable, so he delegated this important task to Sword Demon.

“Roger!” Sword Demon nodded.

Thus, after choosing several Thieves from the mercenary groups and his guild, he passed the authority to Sword Demon. They were currently lacking in manpower, as many mercenaries had withdrawn, so Oathless Sword could only get his men to bear some risk as well.

Once all these Thieves came forward, Sword Demon took them to bring up the rear as the rest of Yunduan City’s players carried on to their next destination.

These players made sure to leave behind messages to those who were currently not with them, informing them of their departure from Linyin City on that very same night toward the next city and telling them to hurry over upon receiving their messages.

Most players received this message rather early, yet quite a number only learned of this when they went online the following night. Among these players was Gu Fei.

The message Gu Fei received was naturally different. Not only

did he have to make the journey alone, he also had to clear off his PK value of over 30 points. He was essentially a walking disaster. ‘Bounty Mission’ was being issued throughout Parallel World, so Gu Fei would still be hunted no matter where he ended up in. Currently, he bore a weighty PK value of 54 points. Many players were already worshiping this slayer god and inquiring about him.

Given the attention others were dedicating into this matter, why would Gu Fei be any different?

Before he logged on to the game, Gu Fei did something he had never done before: he thoroughly researched on the matter. He lurked on Linyin City’s forums for any relevant information about the city. No one wished to lose five levels as well as spend the rest of their in-game lives behind bars. Gu Fei only had a solution to this and that was to do what he had done countless times before: ‘Bounty Mission’.

He was determined to clear off his PK value.

This would usually be a simple task for him, yet he was currently facing a nearly insurmountable difficulty this time.

First, the OP NPC guards would attempt to apprehend him the moment he appeared. There was no point in wondering why they were able to find him; if the players had the Windchaser’s Emblem that let them refresh the coordinates of their targets every minute, why would it be a stretch for the shameless system to give the guards a way to track Gu Fei every second, instead?

Second, Gu Fei was unfamiliar with Linyin City. In Yunduan City, he had essentially been tempered by experience to the point where he could tell the nearest landmark to a place with a glance to the coordinates. In fact, he even knew how populated the said location would be. This was something he had learned after spending all those hours down the streets and alleyways hunting down and slaying bounty targets. In Linyin City, he would have to take note of the very coordinates he was on while running and of

the street intersections, and that was before adding the pursuing guards to the equation. This was a truly disadvantageous setting to be in.

The first problem Gu Fei had to deal with was clearing off his PK value, and the second problem was that he had to complete all the preparations for this task in one day.

He used almost half the day just familiarizing himself with the map for Linyin City hand-drawn by players and getting acquainted with the coordinates of each location as he attempted to find any exploitable route. He also tried finding a loophole to the bounty system, rules for someone with over 30 PK points that he could take advantage of, and any probable weakness of the guards. Unfortunately, not one bit of information turned up during his search.

Gu Fei was the god that first broke through the 30-PK-point ceiling, and he had no predecessor. [He was the first man to eat crab](#) – a pioneer that would now become a teaching experience to future players who would break through the ceiling as well.

Gu Fei was rather annoyed. Even if he went online and Fleeting Smile was online, he was sure he would have difficulty extracting information from the latter.

Maps, terrain, coordinates... He could only memorize these things to the best of his ability in order to efficiently tackle the missions that he was about to pick up in Linyin City.

His reputation as a kung fu genius was not mere talk. As someone known for his kung fu versatility in the martial arts community, no one should doubt Gu Fei's ability to memorize information. After spending half a day memorizing and testing himself, Gu Fei was confident that he did not miss out anything, so he proceeded to enter Parallel World.

A quote attributed to the famous Chinese philosopher called Luxun. Essentially, he stated that the first man to think of eating

crab deserves to be praised, for only a brave man would be bold enough to attempt eating it.

"Crabs look scary and ugly. The first man who had eaten it surely needed courage to do so, but... Just who was this great man?"

Chapter 348 - A Scenic Backdrop

Numerous exclamations resounded the moment Gu Fei appeared in a flash of white light in one of Linyin City's log-off point.

While many players were wondering who the godly existence that earned 54 PK points was, rumors about him had already made their rounds in Linyin City. "That PK God is the present trending Video Mage." Some players who were bored even went offline just to watch the said video repeatedly; these players committed Gu Fei's attire to their memory and went as far as to memorize the number of creases in his Midnight Spirit Robe from shoulder to waist by magnifying the screenshots that they had taken to have a better look of him.

As such, the moment he appeared, Gu Fei was immediately recognized. Excited screams that increase in volume and quantity broke out as there were no shortage of players around the spawn point. It was not long before the crowd became a mob that gathered around Gu Fei. He was then unfortunately subjected to this mob's blatant and inhumane scrutiny.

Gu Fei had calculated and prepared for every possible scenario, yet he had failed to account for the nosiness of the general masses. Toward these players that had countless of hours to spare playing MMOs, Gu Fei could not imagine how powerful their busybody ways were.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk!"

Gu Fei was currently not fighting with anyone, nor was he using any skills, so the crowd could only watch him stand there and give such an inane reaction.

"Everyone, please make way..." Gu Fei helplessly said.

"Yes, yes. Of course!" At least, these players surrounding him knew where to draw the line. Just because they idolized him did

not mean that it was okay for them to block his way. These players who were unintentionally blocking the entrance to the spawn point shuffled to their left and right to make a path out for Gu Fei.

“Thanks a lot, everyone! You guys should also leave if there’s nothing else.” Gu Fei bid the surrounding players farewell before pushing his way through the barely cleared out path. From time to time, some players would reach out to touch Gu Fei as he passed by, causing him to wave and bat off those hands that poked out in his discomfort. I sure have the making of a superstar! he mused.

Unfortunately, this happy scene had to be cut short as cries of “Who’s that?”, “Stop pushing me!” and so on were soon heard coming from the players in the back. Gu Fei instantly knew that the ones whom he had been expecting finally arrived!

The guards the system had sent were still as dull and rigid as ever. With many players gathered in the area, these NPCs did not shout to get them to move or find another route, nor did they attack them. Instead, they single-mindedly advanced forward toward their target. Knowing that Gu Fei was right in front, they opted for the shortest, straight path toward him. The level of intelligence these guards were currently demonstrating raised plenty of doubts among the passionate gamers in the crowd over the AI of this game.

These NPC guards had abundant strength and power, which was why the Hunters’ archer formation of Deep Waters’ guild was almost instantly scattered when they walked through. However, that was a formation players established for PvP to give them a certain space between one another to unleash their skills accordingly, which allowed these guards to brusquely force their way in and caused everyone to fall to the wayside.

Right now, however, the players were all tightly packed around Gu Fei to watch the show, and it was a very inconsiderate and heartless gathering¹ at that.

No matter how strong these guards were, they had no way of defying physics to squash the players blocking their way into meat paste. Moreover, their strength might be huge but it was not immeasurably so. With many players piled together, how easy would it be for them to try and push their way through?

Gu Fei quickly realized that the narrow path the players had formed for him was being swallowed by the guards forcing their way in. He hesitated no more and instantly cast Blink, reappearing five meters ahead. At the same time, the players from either side on the spot he had vacated reintegrated with one another again, their arms flailing as expletives flew freely.

That was close! Gu Fei said to himself. Fortunately, the guards did not form up horizontally like a bulldozer and plow through the crowd, which explained why they were only attempting to push through in such a small area. He was more or less in a safe distance from the NPCs now. It was unfortunate that those players back there were taken by surprise and were now squeezed like conjoined twins.

“This is an opportunity!” His eyes shone with light. Since the NPC guards were foolish enough to rush into the crowd, and the players themselves would take some time to disperse, this blockade was rather effective and afforded him a chance that he did not plan to miss.

Thinking of this, Gu Fei hastened his footsteps some more and adopted the mannerism of a person in a hurry. He ignored these passionate fans of his that were reaching their hands out to him, barely brushing their fingertips on him. This also showed how these gamers were a step above the fans of superstars in how they acted. At the very least, no one was throwing themselves right on to Gu Fei and not letting go despite the lack of any security personnel.

Of course, this could also be attributed to the nature of the person that they were idolizing. A superstar depended on fans’

support for a living, so he or she would not slay them. As for Gu Fei, a raise of his hand meant a player dropping a level at the cost of a mere PK point.

Gu Fei finally made it through while the players were being knocked all over the place by the guards; these players' anger was probably reaching its boiling point. Meanwhile, Gu Fei had already disappeared from everyone's sights, no longer caring for the plight of those players he had left behind.

These players incessantly hurled curses as they slowly began to disperse as the guards waded through the crowd, undeterred from their target. When they realized that they had been blocking the path of guards that the system had sent to apprehend the Video Mage, these players felt even more annoyed and all the more regretful. After all, they were really looking forward to this part of the show. This was another difference between the fans of superstars and of gamers - fans of a superstar would never look forward to their idol being hunted.

Gu Fei sprinted recklessly down the street, attracting everyone's attention everywhere he passed. Oftentimes, those players would raise their hands and called after him; cries like "Wife, quickly come out and see the PK God!" could also be heard time and again.

Since Gu Fei was moving about at his top speed, encircling him would not be as easy as before.

A short distance away, under their captain's command, the guards were emotionlessly chasing after him in an organized and unhurried, yet efficient manner. This squad of guards strongly resembled a pack of Terminators on the hunt. Of course, their termination target was Gu Fei.

Those players who were incidentally in their way were all sent flying. What made this experience worse was that they were trampled on right after they were knocked off their feet, suffering quite a bit even if they did not get killed.

Right behind these uniformly chasing guards was a completely disorganized horde of Linyin City's players. These players, who cared not for their posturing, chased after the guards in hopes of bearing witness to any exciting scene that might crop up.

This lone man being chased by a squad that had a mob following right behind was like a three act structure that framed the scenic backdrop of Linyin City. 'Survival of the fittest' was the name of the game for this chase sequence, so those that had slow movement speed were quickly left in the dust.

Gu Fei looked over his shoulder as he ran. Seeing that the guards were quite a distance away from him, he was loath to use Blink. Spending a full day doing painstaking research paid off as he successfully made it to the Bounty Assignment Hall in no time. Entering the hall to pick up a 'Bounty Mission' was something Gu Fei was used to doing. However, when he got a glimpse of Linyin City's Wanted Players list, he really felt like puking blood.

Linyin City was truly too peaceful. Besides a handful of players with 2 PK points on top of the list, all the targets only had 1 PK point to their name. Gu Fei had no time to gripe about this and just chose any random target before dashing out of the hall. Death was all that awaited him if the guards managed to chase him all the way into the building.

The moment he exited the place, he spotted the guards charging towards him from down the street. Gu Fei did not look at the coordinates and merely ran in the direction that would bring him the furthest away from the guards. Once he got on to the right path, he quickly checked his target's coordinates and felt a headache coming on.

The target was in the exact opposite direction of where he was currently running to. The quickest way to confront this man would be to turn round and pass through the squad of guards after him, but such an act was simply suicidal. This was when Gu Fei's day of homework showed its worth as he was able to plot out the

most effective route that circuited round toward his target's location.

Gu Fei swiftly took to the intersection ahead of him. However, in the next minute, he cried out in dismay at the sight of his target's freshly updated coordinates.

The God of Fortune had clearly abandoned him today, as change between the two sets of coordinates made him believe that his d*mnable target was actually part of the third group forming the backdrop of Linyin City.

Not one method was left besides directly breaking through the guards pursuing him. He needed to find a location that went in a circle and ring around his target's back....

The houses in the city were constructed in rows, so plenty of places where he could circle around existed. However, to create such a large ring around like that... Ignoring whether Gu Fei had enough time to complete this ring or otherwise, he would still have difficulties finding Fugitive 56841 among the mob of fans trailing after him.

Once again, Gu Fei's research proved to be his salvation for this quandary. With a clear grasp of Linyin City's terrain and landform like the back of his hand, he managed to match everything he saw along the way and merging them with the material he had spent half a day poring over. Soon enough, Gu Fei thought of an great idea to rid himself of his current dilemma.

Yuanmu Tavern was the largest tavern in Linyin City, and it was located at the heart of it. Just as the name suggested, the establishment was in the shape of a round timber; its roof was even made out like a tree ring that kept circling round and round.

Gu Fei did not enter the establishment when he got to its entrance. Instead, he went halfway around to the back of the tavern. The guards, who had been chasing Gu Fei all this while, were just three or two meters away from him. Reaching half of

Yuanmu Tavern's circumference, Gu Fei leaped into the air and pointed his finger upward, teleporting himself right on the tavern's roof.

He continued to run when he landed. Somewhere below, he heard the sound of something heavily striking the ground. Gu Fei knew that those NPC guards must be displaying their 'flying up the roof with Earthsplitter skill', but he did not thinking about it at the moment and merely continued to run along the eaves of the roof.

Beyond Gu Fei's expectation, the third 'act' just happened to chase up to them and was running along Yuanmu Tavern. He held the higher ground, so he was able to easily sweep his gaze on the sea of players before him. Gu Fei's target was among these bobbing heads and should have serial number 56841 floating above his head.

"Yahhh!" Gu Fei, who had never once stopped running, used his momentum to leap off the roof and hurtle himself straight to his target.

"Twin Incineration! Incinerate!" Gu Fei chanted loudly as his Moonlit Nightfalls pierced through with uncanny accuracy. At this critical moment, he did not think of how risky his maneuver was (that children should not be emulating at home) and merely thrusted his sword toward his target's forehead.

Gu Fei's sword penetrated through the air as the wind itself seemed to feed the flames on his sword so much so that he could even feel the heat emanating from Twin Incineration.

In that moment, Gu Fei felt as though he had found what the legends often described as the sensation of the wielder and the sword becoming one.

Chapter 349 - Continuing the Expedition

The players that made up this third act should have reached a certain standard in their movement speed. Among the speedsters, only Svelte Dancer was probably capable of surviving Gu Fei's Twin Incineration, provided that she wore her fire-resistant coat.

Gu Fei's current target was only an average player in Linyin City, so he was definitely not the sort that could survive his one strike. White light flashed as Gu Fei's descent from the rooftop continued. The fire from his Moonlit Nightfalls intermingled with that flash of white light, making it seem as though his one strike had caused the person's head to explode in that visual spectacle.

The color on the spectators' faces drained from shock as someone yelled, "The PK God is at it again!" This caused everyone to swiftly clear out a path for Gu Fei and to place their weapons across their chests in a defensive stance.

"Everyone, calm down! I'm just doing 'Bounty Mission'; I'm not the type to slay the innocent for no reason," Gu Fei said.

"Oh..." These people easily connected the dots at his mention of 'Bounty Mission', especially since they had previously seen him run into the Bounty Assignment Hall. However, Gu Fei's claim of not being the type to slay the innocent was quickly met with the crowd's scoff. His PK value of 54 points translated into fifty-four lives, so who would believe that he was not the type to slay the innocent without any reason?

In any case, with the players calming down, Gu Fei managed to easily make his escape. Those under the eaves of Yuanmu Tavern began stretching their necks in search of the NPC guards pursuing Gu Fei. This was when the sound of the ground shattering was heard. Following this sound, a handful of figures sailed through the air in rapid succession. Somehow, the entire squad was able to maintain its orderliness even when mid-air.

"That's way too cool!" The players were entranced by this scene.

However, their awestruck expression over the string of figures' uniform landing turned into one of distress in the next instant.

Who would have guessed that the Earthsplitter skill for jumping up the roof could be used by these guards to get down from the roof as well?

Although these guards were unintentionally targeting them, some unlucky individuals, who happened to be standing right under the point of these NPCs' swords, were unfortunately killed off. These mindless guards would never seek to avoid executing such moves just because there were players in the way. They landed on the ground with such force that even the resulting white lights of the killed-off players dissipated from it.

As for those who were fortunate enough not to be the direct recipient of the killing move, they could only despise the fact that Earthsplitter was an AOE skill. Halving their HP with that first landing, those who had failed to flee in time were turned into white lights when the second guard landed.

Their cries caused Gu Fei to look backward. The series of white lights flashing by the tavern cruelly made for a scene that even he had not foreseen. And because of this incident, all became aware that even onlookers like them could get caught up in this matter.

Gu Fei continued to flee and the guards continued to chase. Once more, he let this squad chase him for a short distance. Just as they were about to catch up to him, Gu Fei patted his Windchaser's Emblem and activated its teleport ability. Upon 'Bounty Mission' completion, the user could teleport himself to the Bounty Mission Assignment Hall by activating it.

Gu Fei was well aware of how fast these guards could move. Having pored over Linyin City's map for almost an entire day, he could more or less determine the guards' distance from the Bounty Assignment Hall. Knowing their distance and speed, he easily

calculated the time that it would take them to reach him. This was just simple math, after all.

Equipped with this knowledge, he could easily accomplish many things, such as munching on an apple to replenish his consumed mana.

The number on the Wanted Players list was as paltry as ever. There were actually many bounties with high PK value last night, but they were all hunted down by either Yunduan City's players or Deep Waters' guildmates.

After filling up his mana, obtaining his next target, and checking the new coordinates, Gu Fei once more mapped out another route in his head while he accurately estimated the chasing guards' current distance to him.

Since this was the first time he had planned out his bounty-hunting operation, Gu Fei's plan was nothing less than perfect. The original difficulty lay in that first wave. He had no idea which direction the system would send the guards for him, so Gu Fei was worried that they would be on him the moment he logged into the game. That would have made things harder for him as he was unsure whether he could make it to the Bounty Assignment Hall without getting caught by the guards.

Thanks to the unintentional interference of the spectators, Gu Fei was able to gain the much needed time to grab his first 'Bounty Mission'. Upon completing this mission, Gu Fei was able to utilize his Windchaser's Emblem to instantly distance himself from the chasing guards. Every subsequent mission he accomplished let him evade their pursuit.

It was a simple yet elegant cycle.

Unless the target he obtained from the Wanted Players list happened to be standing beside the guards, there was simply no need for him to do what he had done before.

Nonetheless, given how huge Linyin City was, the chances of this happening were not exactly high. So far, he had not come across such a situation. After struggling for two full hours, Gu Fei finally breathed easily now that his PK value was down to 29 points after having cleared 24 PK points through the ‘Bounty Mission’ and by staying online for two hours.

Now that his PK value was below 30 points, the NPC guards no longer actively pursued him. He would be fine as long as he avoided the stationary guards and the patrolling soldiers around the city.

Should he clear off all of his PK value now or chase after the group that had departed for the next city? Gu Fei pondered on this for a while before opening the mercenary channel to ask for input.

“You’re not yet in prison?” Young Master Han was the first to respond.

“My PK value is now down to 29 points,” Gu Fei announced his accomplishment.

“How did you deal with the guards?” Royal God Call asked. These mercenaries firmly believed that no players would be able to beat Gu Fei given his transcendent strength, yet they had apparently still underestimated him.

“Nothing much,” Gu Fei answered truthfully, asking back, “And you guys?”

“Us? We’re currently waiting for the ferry.” Gu Fei could detect anger from Young Master Han’s typed words.

“Screw Linyin City’s ferry,” Brother Assist added.

“We’ve been waiting here for two hours,” Royal God Call said.

“God*mm*t.” War Without Wounds did not say anything besides that curse.

“Perhaps, the ferry won’t be there yet by the time I make it

there,” Gu Fei gleefully said.

“Sorry to say but I can already see the ferry approaching,” Young Master Han dispelled his delusion.

“You’ll probably make it over here in a little over an hour if you leave Linyin City now and be able to catch the 11 P.M. ride,” Brother Assist said.

“How long will the journey be?” Gu Fei wrinkled his brows.

“About half an hour based on the information I’ve gathered,” Brother Assist replied.

“That’s fine, I guess. I won’t log off too late.” Gu Fei sighed in relief. “I’ll make my way right now.”

These late-night experts all rolled their eyes.

Gu Fei tidied his attire before stepping out of Linyin City’s Bounty Assignment Hall. He strolled along the streets and, at the absence of any pursuing guards, Gu Fei whistled in a carefree way. He felt as though the air in Linyin City had become fresher.

Arriving at one of Linyin City’s gates, he saw that a large crowd in the midst of sending someone off. Gu Fei reflexively glanced over and realized that the person being sent off was someone he knew. This group of men happened to glance over to him as well. Some of them gawked at the sight of him, and one of them even brandished his saber toward him and bellowed, “I’ll kill ya!”

It was Gu Fei’s turn to widen his eyes at the man charging toward him from just two meters away. This man swung his saber wildly as he incessantly roared.

“Uhm... Is he drunk?” Gu Fei could smell alcohol in the air. Looking at these men before him, he saw that each of them was red in the face and was leaning on one another for support as they swayed in place.

A Mage stepped out and pointed his staff at Gu Fei, saying,

“Thunder - Thunder - Thunder - Thunder ...” for the longest time. He then turned to look at the man beside him and asked, “What comes after ‘Thunder’?”

“Thunderbolt... uh... Strike!” The person chanted as he pointed his finger at Gu Fei. Ignoring that he was not a Lighting Mage, even if he was one, adding that syllable “uh” in the incantation would cause the spell-casting to fail.

At least, the man in front was now aware of the words he had missed. The Mage raised his staff and attempted to chant once more. Gu Fei was about to make his move when someone stepped out and pulled the Mage’s arm, saying, “Forget it!”

“Lushness, it’s that guy!” the Mage Blue Ease pointed at Gu Fei, finally saying something intelligible.

“I know.” Vast Lushness nodded her head. “I’ve long buried the hatchet with him in Yunduan City, so there’s no need to dredge up the past.”

Blue Ease was still in a haze having drunk so much. Shaking his head in confusion, he muttered something unintelligible once more. However, the hand he was using to cast spells was at least no longer outstretched. Vast Lushness gazed at Gu Fei. “Are you trying to catch up to them?”

“Yup!” Gu Fei nodded his head. “Where’s Moony and the others?”

“They left last night while I was catching up with my friends here,” Vast Lushness answered.

“From last night until now?” Gu Fei regarded these drunk as a skunk men that looked as though they had spent the entire night wrestling in the sauce than drinking.

Vast Lushness rubbed her eyes, revealing a tired expression as she nodded. “Yeah!”

“And you’re planning to carry on with the mission right now?”

Gu Fei looked at these men once more. They were evidently old acquaintances of hers in Yueye City. It would be more logical for her to stay and play the game with them from here onward.

“Of course. Since I’ve pledged myself to the mission, it is my responsibility to see it through the end,” Vast Lushness answered before saying, “Let’s go!”

“Oh, let’s!” Gu Fei naturally had no reasons to refuse.

Vast Lushness said goodbye to all her friends and walked alongside Gu Fei. The two knew the way as Gu Fei had those men from Young Master’s Elite informing him while Vast Lushness, even more incredulously, was told in a detailed way for over a hundred and eighty times of the route to reach the ferry by Sakurazaka Moony, who was in fear of them never meeting each other again if she ended up walking the wrong way.

Gu Fei could only regrettably match his walking pace with the Priest he had in tow. Making this trip in an hour was no longer possible. As for two hours... Gu Fei looked at the time. With two hours....

“I don’t think we’re gonna make it for that 11 P.M. ferry,” he said.

“Don’t worry! That port is apparently a log-off point, so it won’t affect the time you go offline.” Vast Lushness glanced over to him.

“Is that so? That’s good, then.” Gu Fei brightened up considerably.

Chapter 350 - Still Not Making It to the Boat

After walking for a quite distance with Vast Lushness, Gu Fei realized that he had made a severe mistake.

He had mistakenly assumed that Vast Lushness was sober when in fact she was also totally drunk. The reason for this mistake was due to the people he had been comparing her with; The demure lady Vast Lushness looked as if she had a good hold of herself with the sloppy men like Blue Ease and the lot acting as a contrast.

Without those men, her state of drunkenness was clearly exposed. She swayed in her steps and her breath strongly stank of alcohol. Gu Fei thought of going back to look for Blue Ease and his men, but he did not know the whereabouts of those drunkards now.

“Hey!” he called out to her.

“What?” She half turned and cast him a sidelong glance.

“There’s a tree in front of you,” he informed.

“You think I didn’t know that?” Lifting her arm, she pushed herself away from the tree she had nearly walked into. In the end, her body was thrown off to a side and her head knocked right into another tree.

Before he could say a word, Vast Lushness shook her head to clear her mind and patted the tree. “Sorry!”

What else could he do besides facepalm?

“Say, why don’t we go back to Linyin City and rest there for a while?” Gu Fei suggested as he watched Vast Lushness keep on walking ahead.

“Eh? You think I’m drunk?” She narrowed her eyes and gazed at him.

“Are you not?” he inquired sincerely.

“Of course not!” Vast Lushness vehemently denied as she continued to walk unsteadily forward.

He was speechless. She was someone who would stubbornly stand her ground even when she was being beaten to death. Adding the obstinacy brought by alcohol, she was currently more difficult to coax her of anything.

Gu Fei could only helplessly follow behind her and occasionally prevent her from bumping into trees. Each time, this would be accompanied by her outburst of “What are you doing?! I can walk by myself!”

Drunk people, besides being obstinate, would often become more talkative. The usually taciturn Vast Lushness would become quite chatty as the topic shifted to the nearest person to her: Gu Fei. Naturally, her question to him would naturally be: “How did you get so powerful?”

“It’s because I know kung fu,” he answered truthfully.

“Kung fu? Hmph!” She looked at him in a way that seemed to say, “Don’t try fooling me just because I’m a little tipsy.”

Gu Fei could only facepalm once more. She was just a drunk person; there was no need for him to treat this question so seriously!

“Tree!” Gu Fei already lost count how many times he had shouted this warning.

She twisted her body away using her conditioned reflexes and barely missed the big tree before her.

At this rate, will we even reach before twelve midnight? he wondered forlornly.

However, misfortune and fortune were always paired together. The good news here for Gu Fei was that the duration of being under the influence of alcohol in-game was not long – just like the pain receptor in-game – after having been tweaked to be much

weaker than in reality by the game designers. Thus, players would quickly sober up after stopping their consumption of alcohol. This explained how Blue Ease and his men were able to continuously drink for nearly twenty hours straight. These men were not hard drinkers, but they managed to accomplish such a feat thanks to this particular aspect of Parallel World.

Vast Lushness finally lost her drunkenness after struggling through the jungle. Having been talking nonstop during their trek through the jungle, the moment she quieted down, Gu Fei knew that she was sobering up.

“You’re sober,” was his first line of words after mentioning ‘kung fu’ before and the occasional warnings of ‘tree’.

Vast Lushness was feeling deeply embarrassed at the moment. She was considered as a smart person. Whenever a smart person got drunk, they would be aware that their drunken self would tend to leave an interesting impression to those around them.

“Did I say anything?” Vast Lushness was truly smarter than most people as she was even aware of her drunken habits. This was a question plenty of drunkards would avoid asking.

“Not much. You said some nonsense that I didn’t bother listening to.” Gu Fei was a smart person as well. He knew that drunken rambling should not be taken seriously. It was normal for people to unwittingly let slip thoughts that they would never utter when sober. It was not necessarily factual that drunken words would be truthful, as people tended to tell the biggest lies while drunk.

Vast Lushness, who was already a woman of few words, became more reticent at this moment. As a result, the two officially began a supposedly quiet journey together.

“Here,” Gu Fei suddenly said.

Looking over, Vast Lushness saw him holding out a pair of boots to her.

“You should wear my shoes first to hasten our pace.” He offered his boots to her.

“Are your boots that great?” She did not hesitate to receive them from him.

“It should at least be better than yours.” Gu Fei was not spouting nonsense. He had been using Appraisal along the way out of boredom that this seldom practiced skill of his managed to identify the traits of her cloth footwear.

“Whoa! These are indeed awesome!” She was shocked when she saw the description for Windchaser’s Boots and curiously asked, “Where did you get them?”

“It’s a reward for consecutively completing 100 ‘Bounty Mission’.” He did not hide this from her.

“Oh?” Feeling stunned for a moment, she then remarked, “No wonder you keep on doing that. Is it for these rewards?”

Gu Fei never really explained his real reason for constantly doing ‘Bounty Mission’; he would simply inform others of how he got this sort of rewards.

“Oh... I see.” Vast Lushness nodded her head before asking with a faint smile, “Do you want me to keep this a secret?” A majority of players would usually ask others to keep such conditions a secret whenever others learned of them.

“Why? It’s not a big deal.” Gu Fei shrugged.

She could naturally tell what his answer was going to be; otherwise, he would not reveal this piece of information to her in the first place. Replacing her footwear with his Windchaser’s Boots and taking two steps forward, she saw visible improvement in her movement speed.

“Hey!” She suddenly heard him call out from behind her.

She looked backward.

“Lend me your footwear in exchange.” Gu Fei smiled wryly. He was standing barefoot right now.

“Whoops! Sorry!” She hurriedly tossed over her shoes to him.

Vast Lushness’s shoes only had just the one trait that added a flat movement speed. These shoes’ value was incomparable to the percentage increase traits for the all-Agility build Gu Fei. He got the short end of the stick in this trade, yet his movement speed was still faster than her. Once more, the two resumed their journey and made great progress now that Vast Lushness was no longer swaying about. He could feel his hope of making it for the 11 P.M. ferry schedule reignite.

Reality was cruel, though.

Just as the two made it to the pier, they saw a large passenger ferry slowly churned away from the shore.

“Darn it!” She raised her middle finger in frustration at the ferry sailing away, finally showing a glimpse of her demonic demeanor that had once made her infamous in Yueye City.

“I didn’t make it on the ship.” Gu Fei regretfully typed on the mercenary channel.

“So we see,” was Young Master Han’s reply.

“Ah, where?” He for the traces of them around him.

“On the ferry,” Young Master Han answered.

Except for the departing ferry and Vast Lushness’s middle finger, Gu Fei did not catching any sign of movement from the ship. Now that he was carefully looking at it, he managed to see something by the stern of the ferry; Royal God Call had his arms open, imitating the iconic pose from Titanic, but was quickly dragged to the side by War Without Wounds, who then took his position to do the same....

Gu Fei turned his gaze away and on to Vast Lushness. “Alright.

Tell me where the designated log-off point here is.”

“Uhm...” She was only aware of that the log-off point’s existence, but she did not know where it was exactly located.

“Get off the deck and head west; it shouldn’t be too far,” a very familiar voice answered.

“Thanks a lot!” he said amid his shock. Someone was actually nearby, yet he failed to sense the person. It was rather mystifying. When he looked at where the sound had originated, he spotted a figure lazing on a bed of straw underneath a half shed by the pier. The arms of the person, whose face was covered by a straw hat, were folded behind the head to function as a pillow while they chewed on a piece of straw.

Seeing the straw hat covering the face and recalling the voice he had heard moments ago, Gu Fei could already tell who the person was. He took two steps forward, drew his sword out, and swiftly flipped that straw hat, sending it flying into the air undamaged.

“Hey! That’s so rude!” Xi Xiaotian’s hand shot out to catch her straw hat, but Gu Fei’s blade was quicker; a quick twist of his wrist knocked that straw hat toward him. His left hand grabbed it midair and he playfully twirled it around his finger.

“What are you doing here?” he asked while gripping his sword tightly and looking at his surroundings. Anywhere Xi Xiaotian appeared would also be an area where danger was present; this was one of the things Gu Fei was certain about.

“Relax. I’m just your average passerby,” Xi Xiaotian grumpily said, adding, “Return me my straw hat.”

“If no one is looking for you, why are you covering your face?” he asked.

“It’s a habit, okay?” she replied.

“Is that so?” Gu Fei flicked his finger and sent that straw hat flying in the air. Xi Xiaotian attempted to reach for it, but he raised

his sword in hand and tidily delivered a couple of slashes, shredding the straw hat into a pile of straw that scattered over Xi Xiaotian. That straw hat of hers was handcrafted and not any particular equipment, making it extremely easy for him to destroy it.

“You!” She was so angry to the point of speechlessness.

Gu Fei cared not for her anger as he calmly scanned the surroundings. He was certain someone would appear soon; Xi Xiaotian would not go to such a place, otherwise.

As Gu Fei thought of this, a player indeed hurried over to them and climbed up the deck noisily.

Gu Fei was congratulating himself for his good judgment when the person arrived before them and happily asked, “Did you three miss the ferry service? How about trying my boat?”

Chapter 351 - Ferry Business

“Your boat?” The three stared at the man. He looked like an average Warrior, and a quick Appraisal showed that he had no particularly outstanding equipment on him, either. He was also only level at 38, which was below the average players’ level in Parallel World at the moment.

“That’s right!” The man grinned and said, “Do you three hope to travel to Linshui City? That ferry just departed; it would take two hours for it to return and two more be to set off. That means that there are four hours in total before all of you can get on your way, so why don’t you all take my boat, instead.”

“Where did you get a boat?” Even the jack-of-all-trades Xi Xiaotian that had rich knowledge about various aspects of the game had never heard of players being able to own ‘boats’ and the ilk.

“Made it myself,” that man replied.

“Made it yourself?” the three echoed. This was something they had no knowledge of and did not know what questions to ask pertaining to the topic of boat-making.

“Uhm... There are many players waiting for the ship just now, right? Why didn’t you offer them a ride on your boat?” Gu Fei curiously asked.

That man laughed bitterly and said, “I am most willing; it is just a pity that my boat can’t accommodate that many.”

“Oh...” the three hummed.

“Anyway, are you three interested?” the man asked once more.

Xi Xiaotian’s eyes glanced over and asked, “This boat of yours, I’m afraid we won’t be riding for free, are we?”

The man chuckled. “Naturally, you all have to pay me to ride my

boat.”

“And how much will it cost?” Xi Xiaotian pressed on.

“50 gold coins,” the man replied.

“So expensive!” the three exclaimed in unison.

The man simply added, “That system-operated ferry charges 60 gold coins a ticket.”

“F*ck! The system is the most despicable,” Vast Lushness angrily spat. Players were already used to how Parallel World would take advantage of them, charging an exorbitant price for things and services while having a monopoly on every aspect of business in the game. Everyone was frustrated about this, yet they were helpless to fix it. Some players with keen foresight predicted that breaking this monopoly would be a guaranteed path to in-game wealth. Because everyone was very resentful over being under the thumb of the system’s monopolization for so long, many reckoned plenty of people would rather let their fellow players earn that same amount than to let the system to get away with it.

This player who had built his boat to start his own ferry transport business seemed to be a forerunner of this realm. The three finally took his offer to ride his boat.

“Follow me, please.” That man was naturally delighted now that the negotiations were successfully completed, leading these three players over to another thatched shack by the pier.

“Where’s the boat?” the three asked curiously. The man nimbly pulled off a layer of straw and a small, wooden rowboat, similar to those found in parks, appeared before their eyes.

“This is the boat you’re talking about? Would this do...” The three were skeptical. After all, the body of water the system had created was far larger than any manmade ponds people would find in parks. The water stretched out as far as the eye could see with fog in the distance. The ship made by the system was not too quick,

either, but it had since been swallowed whole by the fog and was no longer visible to those standing by the shore.

“Don’t you worry; I’ve been doing this for a real long time. The water here is much calmer than you imagine. As long as I know the direction we’re heading to, we’ll be fine even if we’re paddling over on a piece of driftwood,” this man assuaged as he continued to clear out the straw covering his boat. He helplessly explained, “There’s really no other way to hide this except for resorting to this method. It is considered as a handcrafted item, yet I can’t fit it into my dimensional pocket. I guess it’s considered to be too bulky and very heavy as of the moment; maybe, I’ll be able to fit it inside once I level up more!” His current expression showed how much he was looking forward to such an eventuality, dreaming about the day when he could casually carry around his boat in his dimensional pocket.

After he finished clearing the straw, he made his way to the boat’s stern and pushed, slipping it on to the water.

“Please get on board, you three!” The man smiled pleasantly when he said this.

Each of them climbed aboard it. Following this, the man pulled out a long bamboo pole from his dimensional pocket, stabbed it into the water, and pushed with enough force. The little boat swiftly left the shore at this. The man continued this action with great familiarity as the boat steadily gathered speed, demonstrating just how skilled he was at the task, similar to how Gu Fei had brought his real-life kung fu skills into the game and successfully integrated it into the PvP of Parallel World.

“Can the three of you please hand over your payment, please.” The man continued to steer the boat as he said this, adding, “Frankly speaking, if you three up and leave upon reaching our destination later, I won’t be able to chase you all by myself.”

The three did not say anything upon hearing this, and each of

them fished out their money pouch to pay the fee of 50 gold coins. It was an amount these experts could afford.

“Thank you!” Once the payment was made, this person started working even harder. The boat got further and further away from land, as the water got deeper and deeper. Once the pole became entirely useless due to the depth, he kept it and took out two oars, which he tied together to form one double-bladed paddle, before positioning himself at the back of the boat. He began to row with the smooth, skillful movement of a consummate professional.

The novelty the three felt toward the boat and the boatman had long ended. They were no longer fixing their gaze on his way of steering, and they started to admire the view of the lake as they chatted.

“Are you two friends?” Vast Lushness finally asked the question she had wanted to ask back on the shore. Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian evidently knew each other, except the two seemed to share a rather unusual relationship, as though they were friends and enemies.

Neither commented when they heard the question, which only made her feel the oddity of the two’s relationship. She was not a nosy person, however, so she did not pursue this line of query with them.

“What are you doing here?” Gu Fei also started questioning Xi Xiaotian. Seeing no victims around, her appearance here was rather bizarre.

“Just like you two, I’m doing the mission for Traversing Four Seas,” she answered.

“Oh, really? Why haven’t I seen you before?” He found this odd.

“There were over a thousand players doing this mission, so why is it shocking to miss someone?” she asked.

“How did you miss the ferry, then? Didn’t you arrive earlier than us?” When Gu Fei and Vast Lushness arrived, the ship had only left

moments ago. Since Xi Xiaotian was there earlier than them by a bit, she should have been able to make it.

“I was here for quite some time, but I was busy grinding on the monsters nearby and ended up mistaking the time, and missed the boarding time. I would have made it, though, if I were you,” she remarked.

“Huh?”

“Blink!” she explained.

“Ah!” he nodded.

Only then did they notice the absence of rhythmic sound of splashing water from the paddling boatman and that the boat itself was slowing down. The three turned their heads to look and saw the person by the stern of the wooden boat was no longer paddling anymore and was instead holding a shield in hand. He smilingly regarded the three once he saw them look over to him, “You three, do you know how to swim?”

“What are you trying to do?” They already realized that something was amiss.

“If you don’t know how to swim, I’ll simple capsize our boat and you’ll be in big trouble. If otherwise, hmm... How comfortable are you in the water? Can you fight while in the water?” the man asked.

The three exchanged glances. Few people had tried fighting with others in the water, and Gu Fei was truly incapable of doing such as he did not know how to swim. He would be busy drowning the moment he landed in the water, much less even fight back.

“Okay. What do you want from us, so you won’t do any of that?” he asked.

“Simply put, 300 gold coins for a level. You guys are players above level 38, right? I’m sure exchanging one level worth of experience points for 300 gold coins isn’t too shabby a trade,” he

said slyly.

“Meaning, you want us to pay 300 gold coins each?” Gu Fei asked.

“Nope...” The man shook his head, saying “These two beautiful ladies here can pay me 300 gold coins each, but you, my friend, will have to pay me 1200 gold coins since you’re not just losing a level here but four, instead.”

“How do you know I’ve got PK value?” Gu Fei was surprised by this. His PK value of 29 points would cost him four levels a death.

“He he... There’s plenty of strange equipment in this game!” the man replied.

“1200 gold coins... I don’t have that much gold on me,” Gu Fei said.

“Not many do,” The man clearly had a good grasp of gaming conventions. The sum of 1200 gold coins was indeed something not many people would carry on hand or even possess. “That’s why I’ll let you to give me equipment as payment, instead.”

“So it’s like that, huh,” Gu Fei posed as though he were contemplating.

“Buddy, you seem to be stalling for time here.” The man smiled. “I know who you are. To get a PK value of 29 points, you’re that Video Mage, aren’t you? I know your Twin Incineration is powerful, and from your conversation before, it seems you know Blink. Are you thinking of using it with your Twin Incineration the moment I let my guard down?

“Given my knowledge of your identity, why would I not come prepared? You’ll have to insta-kill me, or I’ll immediately jump into the water, capsize the boat, and everyone will suffer! You better stay your hand, my friend! I know you’re a capable man, but chalking it up as a loss once in a while is fine, too!” the man spoke at length, showing his determination to succeed.

At this same moment, Xi Xiaotian sent Gu Fei a private message:

“This guy has a shield with fire resistance trait!”

“It’s fine,” he replied to her.

“What do you plan to do?” she asked.

“Slay him, of course,” he replied matter-of-factly.

“How?”

“Exactly as how he said,” he answered.

“Can you insta-kill him, though? He’s a Guardian with a fire-resistance shield,” she reminded.

“Guess I’ll have to try,” he said. He had never once considered compromising with such sort of people.

“Maybe, I can increase your chances a little.” She sent over this message. Before the man’s speech ended, Xi Xiaotian said, “I’ll pay.”

“This beautiful lady here is a smart cookie.” The man chuckled. “Slowly take out your money pouch and toss it at my feet.”

“The moment he picks the coin pouch up, an opening should present itself.” Xi Xiaotian messaged Gu Fei even as she did what she was told. Her method of creating an opening by making the man reach out for her money pouch was truly excellent. It was just a pity that....

She tossed the coin pouch over to that person’s feet, but his glance barely registered this action before he immediately returned his gaze on the three people in front of him. The shield was still held before his body as he slowly squatted to pick up the pouch.

He must pick this up, as the system would delete and clear the items players toss in ten minutes. The opening Xi Xiaotian had been hoping to create never occurred, though.

Chapter 352 - Row, row, row your boat...

Xi Xiaotian's ploy of tossing the coin pouch did not create any opening. It did not matter, though, as Gu Fei merely remained unmoving from his current position.

"Maybe, he'll count the coins." Xi Xiaotian was hoping that the man would make this rookie mistake. The man, however, merely lifted the money pouch to assess its weight before putting it inside his dimensional pocket. Xi Xiaotian's 300 gold coins were thus expended just like that. Even if she killed this man after, she would have no way of recovering that money.

Gu Fei also revealed a wistful expression at this point. This was not due to them failing to create an opening but due to Xi Xiaotian giving the man money. He plaintively said to her, "You shouldn't have given him money!"

He did not say this through a private message but blurted it out in the open, which clearly telegraphed to the man that Gu Fei was not planning to pay up. The man's expression contorted with annoyance when he heard him say this.

"Speaking of which, have you thought such a situation through before?" Gu Fei was still smiling. "If someone pays while the others don't, what will you do?"

The man's face continued to twist, as though Gu Fei had just poked him on his sore spot. It was evident that such thorny situations happened more often than not during his extortion career, and they usually ended rather poorly, leaving him with a mental scar as a result.

Killing the players who refused to pay up after capsizing the boat and rescuing the ones who did... Such show of integrity would really go against a robber's nature.

"It seems you're not planning pay up, eh?" the man said this

through gritted his teeth.

“That 300 gold coins you gave him will be for naught as you’ll end up in the water as well.” Gu Fei blatantly ignored the extortionist as he spoke to Xi Xiaotian. “Translocation! Blink!” He chanted the spell incantation the moment he finished talking to her.

Clearly, the man had got plenty of experience dealing with this kind of situation. Although Gu Fei could close in on his target faster than most players, the man’s way of dealing with this kind of matter had always been the same.

With his shield propped before him, the man moved to enter the water!

The person was apparently telling the truth; he could indeed very comfortable with being in the water. No matter how strong his opponents were, he was confident that he could circumvent them in his preferred environment.

“Twin Incineration!”

He heard Gu Fei chant, yet his body was already bending out of the boat.

He did not jump in, move to plunge into the water midair, or even dove into the water imposingly. All he did was simply lean his body forward in a great imitation of a man falling overboard and into the water. Although his posture lacked finesse, it was actually the most efficient way to get into the water.

Unfortunately for him, Gu Fei’s attack was much faster than that.

“Incinerate!” The incantation finished, and the man, who had leaned forward to enter the water, soon realized that he was actually falling in the direction of where heat was emanating from. When he lowered his head, he saw Gu Fei’s Moonlit Nightfalls came slashing in from an inconceivable angle and right where he

was falling to, causing him to meet Gu Fei's sword directly.

He wanted to dodge it, but it was already too late; with his body's falling posture, he could not correct his position in time.

In the end, all he could do was look on as Gu Fei, who had also bent his body forward, fell toward the boat with his sword flashing out.

Gu Fei had anticipated the man's move. No matter if the man jumped, fell, or slid, his body would still go sideways.

Gu Fei latched on to this sliver of chance and was prepared to send his sword out. His timing was impeccable as well; Gu Fei lifted his sword in the exact moment that the man was in a position where he could not re-stabilize himself immediately.

Whether it would be enough to insta-kill him or otherwise was the only thing left in suspense.

Although he could not utilize his shield to block Gu Fei's sword slash, his high HP as a Guardian might be sturdy enough to withstand it.

Gu Fei's hand sank.

The man fell on to his blade; if the man was insta-killed, he would turn into white light and quickly fade from here.

However, that was not what had happened. The Guardian glanced at his HP and saw clearly how close to death he was. The stone in his heart dropped as he waited for his body to fall into the water. All he needed to do now was to capsize the boat and finish off this arrogant Mage.

In that instant, this man planned out Gu Fei's end.

However, he had forgotten something. He had a total of three clients onboard his boat, so he was not simply fighting against Gu Fei.

That moment Gu Fei attacked, the two ladies unleashed their

attacks as well.

A black cloud formed at the tip of Vast Lushness's staff, which swiftly contracted and imprinted itself on to the Guardian's body. The Guardian had just slipped out of Gu Fei's blade and was about to hit the water's surface head-first when that attack turned him into white light.

Even Gu Fei was stunned by this. His left hand was emitting bluish light, but he never got to connect it to the Guardian's body. Recalling that spell, he turned his gaze over to the two ladies behind him.

Xi Xiaotian was looking at Vast Lushness with a short bow in hand. She did not manage to fire off her nocked arrow as well; indeed, there were too many steps to accomplish before Archers could launch their attacks. Xi Xiaotian failed to complete the shot cycle given how quick everything went.

"Kiss of Death? You're a Dark Priest?" the knowledgeable Xi Xiaotian asked Vast Lushness.

Vast Lushness nodded her head.

Priests could advance into either Light Affinity or Dark Affinity once they reached level 40, just like Knights. The character's nature for either affinity would diverge with this advancement.

The first skill a Dark Priest would learn was Kiss of Death, which was an instant-cast offensive spell. While Priests were dependent on others prior to reaching level 40, Dark Priests were capable of solo grinding thanks to this level 40 skill. However, the healing capabilities of the Priests would greatly diminish if they advanced into a Dark Priest. Thus, Dark Priests were in a very awkward position as even placing them in parties became difficult to justify as a result.

The offensive skill, Kiss of Death, was nothing compared to the other job classes' skills in terms of damage. As for the Dark Priests'

healing, it was simply not on par with that of normal Priests and even more so of Light Priests.

Having a job class that could attack and heal was actually not a bad thing, but if a party was looking to maximize the efficiency of each job class, it simply had no need for this sort of all rounder.

Although the game officials assured the players that the view toward Dark Priests would change once their level increased and they unlocked their full potential, but, at the moment, they were still a symbol of loneliness. Those Priests who had chosen to become Dark Priests were vexed, yet they could only grit their teeth and hope for spring to come.

It was a norm for ladies to choose the Priest job class, but few of them would advance to the lonely path of the Dark Priest job class. This was precisely why Xi Xiaotian was quite surprised when she discovered that this lady Priest before her was a Dark Priest.

Gu Fei had limited understanding of support job classes like the Priest, so he was unaware of the Dark Priests' current standing in the game. All he knew was that Vast Lushness's skill was a great help and he nodded his head to express his gratitude for her timely assistance.

"Say, since you were planning to attack, you didn't really need to wait for any opening, so why didn't you just do what you did right away?" Xi Xiaotian was feeling the pain of losing 300 gold coins for nothing.

"I was waiting," he replied.

"Waiting for what?"

"I was waiting for my PK value to drop to 28 points in two minutes before attacking; otherwise, it would jump straight back to 30 points and I need to configure the whole thing all over again. That would be really troublesome." A squad of guards chasing after him was not an enjoyable experience. Although Gu Fei had

managed to escape before, he did not wish to go through it all over again. He might be tempted to duke it out with them if there were just one or two NPC guards, but the system would regrettably always send out a full squad to pursue those with over 30 PK points.

His explanation only made Xi Xiaotian more rueful over her 300 gold coins. Her money had really been wasted. “Why didn’t you say so earlier?” she asked bitterly.

“That man’s dead, so we’ll have to row the boat ourselves.” He ignored her question and merely said this. Standing by the stern of the boat and grabbing a hold of the double blade paddles, he paddled twice. The boat turned around in a circle.

“This isn’t as simple as it looks, it seems.” He wiped the sweat off his brow and began paddling once more, turning two full circles this time.

“Let me try.” Xi Xiaotian came over and tried a few times, but she only managed to turn the boat on a spot, except it was in the opposite direction of where the boat had turned with Gu Fei’s attempt.

“You are left-handed,” he concluded.

Vast Lushness gave it a shot next, but the boat also only turned around on a spot. They had been turning around so much that the three were beginning to feel nauseated.

“We seem to have a serious problem at hand,” he remarked.

The two ladies stayed quiet.

“That man should’ve threatened us with this, instead,” he lamented.

“Let’s untie the sculls and row this boat. That should resolve the problem!” Xi Xiaotian suggested.

This was something anyone who had been to the park and rowed

the boats there would know. Thus, two persons each took the left and the right respectively and did their best to row the scull on either side, allowing the small, wooden boat to push past the waves. Cool breeze greeted them even as the water surface reflected the worry etched on Gu Fei's face.

Compared to that hoodlum's paddling from before, the speed at which their boat moved forward was far from ideal. The sculls were slightly long to work manually like what they were doing, making it very unwieldy. Right now, the water around them appeared boundless in every direction, which subconsciously took a toll on their morale.

"Which direction should we be heading?" the three did not know where their destination lay.

"Ask those guys on the ferry. We can't go wrong if we chase after their coordinates," Xi Xiaotian said.

"Must you use the word 'chase'? I doubt there's anything in this world slower than our boat," he lamented.

"Not necessarily. Their ship didn't move fast as well when it churned away from the pier before. Trust the system's shamelessness," Xi Xiaotian said.

Vast Lushness managed to learn the ship's coordinates while the two were arguing, and their little boat forged ahead against the waves in the said direction.

Chapter 353 - Danger on the Water

As the three became used to working the sculls and their rowing skills steadily improved, allowing the boat to gradually pick up speed. They had to thank the game designers' choice to limit physical fatigue in game. The three took turns with the two oars purely for fairness's sake as not one of them really felt tired.

Right now, the little wooden boat was no longer struggling with the waves but was actually riding the winds and breaking the waves. Gu Fei watched the waves broke through the water surface and splashed fitfully against the boat and nodded his head approvingly, "Perhaps, we can really catch up to the ferry."

The three saw neither traces of the ship nor any land in the vast stretch of water that lay before them, which likely meant that the rest of Yunduan City's players were still sailing along.

"We may even reach Linshui City before them." He started to go overboard with his expectation.

Still, everyone was happy to have this expectation. It was rather boring to drift about like this, after all. This was even more so of their need to row the boat – only a child would find this particular task exciting.

Vast Lushness, who was currently lounging by the boat's bow after swapping out to rest, spotted something moving up ahead. She quickly turned her head over and excitedly announced to the two, "There's something up ahead!"

"What is it?" The two, who had their heads lowered and backs bent as they were rowing the sculls, abruptly lifted their heads to take a look.

Everyone saw a shadow ahead.

"It's too small to be dry land." Xi Xiaotian was the first to feel disappointed. With the current speed their boat was going, they no

longer merely looked forward to catching up to the ferry; it was now more important for them to get on dry land.

The shadow became clearer the closer it got to the three. Eventually, the trio could tell that the shadow was moving – moving toward their small boat. Soon, another two similar-looking shadows began to appear in the horizon, and all of them were moving toward them.

“It’s a boat.” The first shadow’s current distance toward them finally allowed the three to identify what it was. The boat that they were seeing was similar to the one that they were currently occupying.

Since the first shadow was a boat, it was only natural to assume that the other shadows were boats as well. Standing by the bow, Vast Lushness counted up to five boats so far, excluding the possibility of more still hiding in the fog

“What’s going on?” The three curiously examined the boats as a sense of foreboding crept on them. The boats’ heading direction seemed to really be them.

The boats continued to draw closer to them. The three could now say with certainty that the boats were exactly the same as theirs. Four players were occupying each boat. Naturally, the approaching players were not each rowing like how Gu Fei and the ladies were; each of the approaching boats had one player assigned to paddle at the back. As for the three others on board each boat, they were standing by the deck and holding their weapons at the ready as they glared maliciously at Gu Fei, Vast Lushness, and Xi Xiaotian.

The first boat was rapidly heading toward their three-man boat without showing any signs of slowing down or turning away in the slightest.

The three had every wish to evade this incoming boat. However, while they could now easily row the boat in a straight line, they were still inexperienced when it came to their boat handling,

unable to expertly turn it in other directions with ease. As a result, not only did they fail to evade, the three unintentionally exposed the side of their boat to the incoming vessel.

Besides the man who was rowing the boat, the other three players onboard were already hunkered down with their hands tightly gripping the gunwale.

Gu Fei and the two ladies were certain of these players' intention from the action they took; these four men were planning to crash the trio's boat by intentionally colliding with them. Since these players were expecting a violent collision, it only made sense for them to grip the boat's edge tightly. Given the speed at which the opposing boat was gliding towards them, Gu Fei and gang would be in serious trouble if these players manage to capsize or even destroy the boat upon impact.

Moreover, even if Gu Fei finished these approaching men off instantly, the collision of the two vessels was basically unavoidable by now, as he had no way of stopping the inertia of the boat swiftly gliding in the water toward them.

Without a delay, Gu Fei reached for a coil of rope in his dimensional pocket.

Gu Fei had plenty of rope in his dimensional pocket, but this one he had just taken out was different from the others as it had a hook fastened on its end. Just like that sai he had, this metal hook was an item he had specially acquired from a quest to fashion himself a simple sky hook¹. This was also considered as a type of ancient weaponry with a long history. While most people would associate this item to thieves, who would use it to scale walls, it was actually an important tool used during war to defend a city.

Currently, this item no longer had any particular use unlike in wartime, but it could still be utilized as a soft weapon through kung fu.

At this moment, Gu Fei swiftly tossed this coil of rope outward

and it easily found purchase on the gunwale of the other boat further away.

“Quick!” he cried out to the two ladies. The two ladies were jolted into action and reached out to grab a hold of the rope. Following this, the three firmly planted their feet by their boat’s hull and tugged at the rope with all their might. The enemy boat that was hooked by the rope was forced into a different direction when they pulled at the rope. At the same time, the trio’s boat was able to borrow the force behind their pull to avoid crashing with the enemy boat that was already bearing down on them. This enemy boat, which was supposed to collide with Gu Fei and company’s boat, could no longer alter its new heading direction. Barely grazing past the stern of Gu Fei’s boat, both vessels grinded against each other for the longest time and rocked violently as a result.

“Hold on!” Gu Fei called out to the two ladies.

Both did not need further prompting and just gripped the gunwale until their knuckles turned white. Gu Fei, for his part, swayed with the boat but never lost his balance.

“How did you do that?” The two ladies were astonished.

“Lower body kung fu.” He smiled. He would sound ridiculous if he said that this was all due to this practice with ‘Thousand Catty Press’ or anything of the sort. When he said ‘lower body’, he was actually referring to the stability and balance he had through limb support. The strength in the lower limb was important in counteracting the pressure being applied on it – just like how a player needed lower limb strength to defend the inside line position in the basketball court. Gu Fei was able to maintain stability amid the boat’s rocking motion as the strength he needed to counteract it was not much.

Thanks to inertia, after avoiding that collision, Gu Fei’s boat continued to drift in the direction of the hooked boat. The three no longer needed to worry about colliding with the hooked boat as the

generated force upon impact would not be large anymore. At this moment, Gu Fei flourished his sword and cast Descending Wheel of Flames on the enemy boat.

The four players on the boat quickly huddled up as one of them raised a shield above their heads. With how slow the descent of Gu Fei's flame wheel, the enemies were able to get into position and wait for a while. While the Guardian holding the shield aloft was shocked by the damage caused by his one spell, the four ultimately survived his attack. The Priest among them quickly started bestowing Heal on his comrades.

Realizing that his spell would not work, he quickly followed it up with Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno. He was guessing that the enemy players would likely find it hard to stand atop the shield while onboard a boat, yet he did not expect for them to abandon the boat altogether and threw themselves into the water without a moment's hesitation.

Although the raging inferno continued to burn, its effect was significantly weakened on the water surface. This spell that should have lasted for five seconds only lasted for two or three seconds. The boat burned rather intensely, yet it returned to its original state after the five seconds ended. The four players' heads emerged from the water surface. Grabbing a hold of their boat, they deftly clambered onboard and huddled together once more under the Warrior's raised shield as the Priest kept his Heal up. All of them looked calm.

Besides the two aforementioned job classes, the other two players were a Mage and Archer respectively. Each had a job class that could damage and kill from afar. However, they were forced into a defensive position by Gu Fei's initiation of an assault. So far, all these players had done was posing, leaping into the water, and clambering aboard after. Stabilizing themselves on a rocking boat was not easy; even experts might find it difficult to execute attacks while on board.

The enemy Archer was holding the gunwale; with only one free hand, it was impossible for him to fire off an arrow. The Mage managed to unleash Arctic Whirlwind with his staff, but the rocking motion of boat caused his body to follow suit. Although he did not wish to move the arm holding his staff, he was helpless in that aspect, and the rhythmic swaying of the boat caused his cast Arctic Whirlwind to forge a serpentine path outward. When the Mage saw that it would miss his targets entirely, he resolutely ended his cast, and the Arctic Whirlwind dissipated into the air.

Gu Fei took in the scene before him as the boat in front continued to bob on the water. The enemy boat that had closely brushed past Gu Fei and company's boat continued along the same trajectory as before. The players onboard it did their best to steady themselves as they steered the boat around; otherwise, they would head in the direction of the pier that Gu Fei and the others had departed from earlier.

Three other enemy boats – just behind these two enemy boats – were currently rushing headlong toward Gu Fei and company's boat, seemingly picking up speed as they did so. Given their precarious situation, Gu Fei unhesitatingly raised his sword and cast a spell. Lightning pealed from the sky, formed itself into a wall right on the water surface, and ran right before the bow of the three boats.

While fire spells would be weakened upon contact with the water surface, lightning spells would instead be amplified upon contact with any body of water. The splash of water on the web of electricity caused it to crackle and spark violently, the ensuing visual and sound effects adding to its grandeur. The players onboard the three boats did not know what it was, but the atmosphere it was lending made them hesitate to approach further. However, while the Electric Wall remained immobile, the boats continued to drift toward it, bringing everyone onboard them closer to the spell's waiting embrace with every passing

second.

These little wooden boats were not equipped with gear to halt their forward movement instantaneously. The players in charge of paddling these boats were already doing their best to reverse paddle, yet they were finally paying the price for being far too vigorous in their acceleration. Although their reverse paddling helped slow down the boats, the boats still continued to glide ahead. The players onboard the first boat kept backing away until they were gathered on its stern, causing the boat to become imbalance and capsize, dunking all four of them right into the water.

When the other players on the remaining two boats saw this, they did not dare to back out too far. Since the boats could not be stopped and that Electric Wall remained lying ahead, there was only one option left for them if they did not wish to get into direct contact with it: jump!

The sound of eight players splashing into the water was heard as their boats continued straight onward. Several of them began to swim toward the boats while circumventing the troublesome Electric Wall.

The result achieved by this one cast of Electric Wall was well worth celebrating. Gu Fei had used up all his mana by now, but Vast Lushness happened to be present. With a wave of her staff, she activated her Mana Sacrifice and Gu Fei's mana began to replenish. He lifted his finger and cast Blink, appearing on the boat that was still steadily rocking its passengers.

“Twin Incineration! Incinerate!” Gu Fei’s sword slashed out. At such a crucial moment, he no longer cared about his PK value going up to 30 points.

Chapter 354 - The water's cold, too.

The poor Guardian in the four-man party still had his shield held aloft, as though he were praying to the heavens, when Gu Fei appeared before him after casting Blink. The Guardian wanted to lower his shield to protect himself, yet Gu Fei's nearness to him made it so that if he brought his shield down, he would end up embracing Gu Fei instead of blocking him.

Death was what awaited any player who showed the slightest hesitation in front of Gu Fei. The Guardian, and the Archer and Mage on his either side, were all slain the moment Gu Fei's Twin Incineration glided past. The Priest hiding behind the three players managed to escape death temporarily. However, Gu Fei took special care of him once the others were dead, delivering a flurry of cuts and slashes that was as relentless as a torrential rain....

Xi Xiaotian was having a lot of fun right now. A total of twelve players were floating in the water, with four trying their best to right their capsized boat and eight chasing after their boats as they drifted away. She continuously pulled back her bowstring to bully these players drifting in the water with her arrows.

The eight players were clearly comfortable in the water, although they were nowhere near the level of that Zhang Shun character in the novel Water Margin. Nonetheless, they could not escape Xi Xiaotian's shots and were hit on their heads, making their experience exceptionally unbearable.

The first enemy boat that had sped past Gu Fei and company's boat finally corrected its course and was now making its way over. However, the players onboard this vessel were stunned by the sight that greeted their return. Out of the remaining four boats, the players on three boats were all in the water, while the players on one boat were nowhere to be found. Only a black-clothed Mage stood on that boat. At this moment, the Mage turned to point to

them as he chanted a spell.

“Quickly dodge!” the Mage on the boat cried out.

From Gu Fei’s hand movement, the players could tell that he was currently casting Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno. Mages were now used to subvocalize their incantations, yet experienced players could still determine the spells Mages were casting from their gestures.

The magic staff would be pointing upward if it was Descending Wheel of Flames; the staff would be pointing down if it was Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno. Seeing that Gu Fei was pointing toward their feet, they were certain that the spell he had just cast was Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno.

If the spell were from any other Mages, they would just grit their teeth and bear its damage. However, the Guardian who had blocked Gu Fei’s Descending Wheel of Flames with his shield before was well aware of how terrifying Gu Fei’s Spell Damage was. Naturally, he had informed the others of how unwise it was to attempt withstanding Gu Fei’s spell. This was actually why they had leaped into the water when Gu Fei had cast his Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno back then. As such, right now, they also decided to jump into the water the moment they saw Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno being unleashed again.

Unfortunately for them, Gu Fei was faking it and did not actually cast a spell.

This move would not be impactful in a conventional setting, and it would, at most, make the enemies run a few extra steps. As they were currently fighting amid a body of water, this one trick had severe consequences. Once these players were in the water, returning to their boat would be difficult. This was due to how rocky the boat was, as demonstrated by the capsizing that had happened moments ago.

Hence, these four players did not bother trying to get onboard

again and instead began to tread in the water while hurtling attacks at Gu Fei.

The Mage sent spells while the Archer fired off arrows.

With the boat's limited space, Gu Fei could dodge the arrows but not the AOE spells. However, the damage from the AOE spells of the average Mage was nothing much. Gu Fei waved his sword to trade spells with the Mage, but the Guardian instantly raised his shield to protect his companion. As such, Gu Fei's Thunderbolt came crashing onto the man's shield.

Gu Fei quickly followed it up with a real Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno, yet its damage was weakened when unleashed on water. Still, every bit of damage counted. However, these players seemed to have seen through his gimmick and swiftly ducked their heads underwater....

These players had no means to dodge Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno while onboard the boat, but they unexpectedly gained the ability to do so when in the water. Gu Fei felt helpless as he watched these players wait for the flames to extinguish before resurfacing and continuing their attacks on him.

Just as these four players thought that Gu Fei was out of moves, his sky hook came flying out of nowhere once more and he followed through with a quick jerk.

“Arghh—” The scream of the Mage in the four-man team was cut short when he drank a big gulp of water. Gu Fei had tossed the hook at him and it latched onto his robe. The boat rocked as Gu Fei tugged at the rope, pulling the Mage toward him.

The accessories Gu Fei had equipped gave him quite a bit of Strength, so most Mages were unable to compete with him on this front. The Guardian quickly attempted to hold the Mage back, but unfortunately for them, Gu Fei only needed that moment. Pointing his sword in hand, Thunderbolt pealed from the sky and struck the Mage, whose upper torso was above the water due to Gu Fei pulling

him with the sky hook. The Guardian ended up grasping nothing but white light.

Gu Fei jerked his right hand, returning the sky hook into his hand. These players were livid! It was now their turn to be out of moves; besides the Mage's AOE spells, every other attack they had left could easily be dodged by Gu Fei.

Meanwhile, the ‘swimming athletes’ that were being tormented by Xi Xiaotian’s periodical shots lined themselves up into a team, with the Guardians holding shields high and the others hiding behind them. Together, they swam toward the boat where Xi Xiaotian and Vast Lushness were.

Having taken care of the Mage in the once four-man team, he temporarily ignored the other three and turned his attention to the two ladies. He then flourished his sword out once more.

“D*mn! Watch out!” The now three-man team watched Gu Fei conjure another Electric Wall on the water with that wave of his sword. The group of eight players hiding behind the shields was unaware of this as they swam toward the two ladies. They vaguely heard their comrades’ warning and were processing it when the two Guardians in front hit the Electric Wall with their shields.

Convulsion. Severe convulsions.

These players would look comical if they were on land, but since they were in the water right now, the two’s full-body convolution was starting to drown them.

Noticing that his Descending Wheel of Flames’ cooldown had ended, he quickly tossed out one at the players.

The Guardians were unable to raise their shields to defend themselves from this spell. Meanwhile, the remaining Archers, Priests and Mages hurriedly scattered in every direction to evade this spell.

Gu Fei’s casting time was slow, but since his targets were in the

water and could not run as fast as when on land, his Descending Wheel of Flames managed to hit four players. Two Archers and one Mage instantly disintegrated. One Priest managed to escape by the skin of his teeth.

These pirates finally realized that the issue on their hands was not if they should carry on with robbing these three players, but if they could survive this clash. The four players that were still attempting to right their capsized boat came to the realization that only their four-man team, out of five teams, had no casualty. They finally stopped their fruitless endeavor upon seeing that most of their comrades were no longer around and instead took cover behind their capsized boat as they carefully assessed the situation.

Three players, who were holding shields, looked as though they were out of tears shed.

The two Guardians, which had their shields stuck to the Electric Wall, seemed to be about to drown.

The remaining Mage and two Priests, who had just managed to survive from certain death, were now in a daze.

Gu Fei was also in pain when he saw his PK value climb up to 36 points. He no longer had the heart to continue slaying. He teleported himself back to the boat he and the others were using with Blink as Xi Xiaotian and Vast Lushness began rowing. Gu Fei stood dashingly by vessel's bow as he surveyed the area around them. Those players in the water averted their gazes when he glanced by. The Archer hiding behind the boat with the rest of his unscathed team gathered his courage and sneaked an arrow at him, causing Gu Fei to bat it away with a swipe of his sword as he casually responded with Blazing Tree of a Thousand Inferno.

The four players quickly ducked underwater in fear, not daring to reveal their heads even after the flames abated. Only when their HP started depleting did they dare to surface to breathe air. The three had already covered quite a distance with their rowing.

Behind them were empty a few boats bobbing on the water surface, looking utterly desolate.

The lucky survivors swam and clambered on to the respective boats. Looking at their drenched selves, they felt for the first time that the water was really cold.

“Is anyone chasing us?” Vast Lushness, who was doing the rowing, asked Gu Fei this. The latter ran to the boat’s stern to take a look and eventually shook his head. “Nope.”

“Who were those people? What did they want from us?” she pressed on. Even with the end of this bout of PvP, they were still clueless on why matters had quickly descended into such. Not one word was exchanged between the two parties involved throughout the clash.

“They were probably trying to rob us,” Xi Xiaotian hypothesized, explaining, “The method they’ve used is similar to that guy from before. From each team’s job-class composition, it’s clear that their forte is on ranged attacks. For them to begin their attack on us by ramming our boat, I believe that they were looking to shock and awe us. They were probably attempting to show us their superiority in this type of environment so as to make it easier to convince us into giving them what they want. As for whether they would leave us dead or alive after...” She threw Gu Fei a glance at this part. “Since you have high PK value, you’re the favorite target of this bunch of bandits. I doubt they’d let us off easily.”

“Bandits...” Gu Fei muttered. He suddenly recalled Nightmare of Death and his lot. They were a part of an organization that had a foothold in every in-game city. Do these robbers from Linshui City have any connection to that organization?

“Are you thinking of Nightmare of Death?” Xi Xiaotian actually read his mind. “I am also wondering about the same thing. There’s a high possibility of them being part of the same organization.”

“Aren’t you mixing in with them? Have you heard anything

about this?" he asked.

"No... I don't even know much about their operation in Yunduan City. They are really professional when it comes to their work, like they are part of one company," she answered.

"Uhm... Just what exactly are you two talking about?" Vast Lushness, who had been listening all this time, was absolutely confused.

Hence, Gu Fei quickly introduced her to the evil organization.

"Tsk. Here I was wondering what's going on! Aren't such things the norm in MMOs?" As someone from Yueye City, Vast Lushness did not consider this to be a big deal at all. Over in Yueye City, even the noob branch of The Black Hand mercenary group engaged in such blatant robbery. Players over there were either killing or being killed and robbing or being robbed – they spent their time interchanging roles as they played on.

"That boat guy from before should be working with those guys. There's no other way for them to find out that a boat with people is out here if that's not the case." Gu Fei continued to analyze the situation.

"Hmm... That guy is most likely out here doing a side hustle," Xi Xiaotian said.

"Side hustle?" This term sounded too technical, and neither Vast Lushness nor Gu Fei had heard of it.

"If he is hunting his marks outside the organization's knowledge, then what he did is called a side hustle. It's one of those things which is never spoken in front of the higher-ups but is unofficially acknowledged and condoned as a possible pursuit," Xi Xiaotian explained.

Chapter 355 - Dhow

“He he! You seem to know a lot about this.” Gu Fei laughed dryly.

Xi Xiaotian ignored the sarcasm in his words as she continued, “If they are truly from the same organization, then we are not out of the woods yet. If this is an order from the head of that organization, then it’s a job that they must do no matter what, as failure to accomplish it will result in salary deduction and bonus cancellation. As such, they’ll likely hunt you down even if it means risking their lives. They’ll be more determined than an average player looking to PK you.”

“I really look forward to such a day,” he said wistfully. He loved it when people would come and attempt to rob him. Not only could he perfectly justify slaying them, he would even make a name for himself as a righteous helper of his fellow man; why would he not be happy about it?

“Violent Fei...” She speechlessly stared at Gu Fei, who was slowly wiping his Moonlit Nightfalls by the boat’s bow as he stood there.

Amid their suspicions and guesses regarding that gang of robbers’ identity, their boat bobbed with the waves on its way forward. After a while, a huge blurry form began to appear in the fog ahead of them. Gu Fei, Xi Xiaotian, and Vast Lushness studied the form closely and felt gratified when they confirmed that it was undoubtedly land.

“We’re finally here.” Vast Lushness exhaled in relief.

Xi Xiaotian, for her part, glanced over to Gu Fei and asked, “What’s your PK value right now?”

“36 points...” he answered. He was naturally worried about this matter as well.

“The guards haven’t come and tried to apprehend you all this while!” Xi Xiaotian was puzzled over this. Quite some time had

passed since the conclusion of that fight earlier; if those guards were sent out the instant his PK value hit 30 points, they should be in front of Gu Fei right now.

“I’m wondering about that myself!” He sighed. Information over the sort of treatment players with over 30 PK points would receive was scarce, as no one else besides Gu Fei had experienced it in Parallel World.

“There must be a certain range the guards can be sent out. I think they won’t pursue you to the ends of the world,” Vast Lushness opined.

He nodded and expressed, “I’ll quickly erase my PK value once I reach the shore.”

“All the best!” The two ladies gave their heartfelt well wishes.

In this kind of atmosphere, the little wooden boat continued onward. The fog eventually cleared up and the three were finally able to make out what was in front of them. They saw the city of Linshui at the center of an island, its towering walls, and... a squad of guards embarking on a watercraft by the harbor.

The vessel looked far different from a normal ship and definitely nothing like the crude, handcrafted boat Gu Fei and the ladies were on. The design of the boat that they were on seemed to have been based off the fishing boats found in Jiangnan water township, with the end product looking like a misfit aberration in this Western-style MMO. As for the watercraft before them, its design seemed to be based off from the three-mast dhow that was popular in the Mediterranean Sea during the medieval era.

This type of watercraft could easily roam the entire Atlantic Ocean during the Age of Sail; Gu Fei and company’s little wooden boat was simply inferior in every single metric.

The sails on the watercraft unfurled grandly once the squad of guards boarded it; whether there was a breeze or not, it was

already making its way explosively toward the little boat of Gu Fei and the ladies.

“They are coming straight for me, huh.” Gu Fei grimaced.

The two ladies gave him a blank look. Did he even need to say that? The only difference these daunting guards clad in armor had with the guards in the other in-game cities was the water-ripple symbol emblazoned on their shields, which easily identified them as hailing from Linshui City.

“Quick! Let’s escape!” Vast Lushness cried out as she started to turn around their little boat.

“Can we circumvent them as we head for land?” He might be able to deal with these guards if they made it to land, but if they remained in the water... Gu Fei would have no way of escaping them if they demonstrated their Earthsplitter skill on the boat itself!

“It’s going to be difficult...” Vast Lushness, who was steering the small boat, came to this conclusion as she observed the speed at which the dhow was barreling toward them.

The dhow was fast and its riggings allowed for really tight controls. It was unknown if this was another design that the system had shamelessly violated against normal convention.

“Let’s make a break for it first! Perhaps, they’ll stop their pursuit if we leave Linshui City’s region.” Vast Lushness adjusted the direction they were heading as she rowed the boat with all her might. Xi Xiaotian was also hard at work. Instead, it was the initiator Gu Fei, who was standing by the boat’s stern, that did nothing.

The three were depressed. Land was just right ahead, yet they were unable to enter it because a fugitive was aboard the boat.

What made it worse was that their little, wooden boat’s speed was infinitesimally insignificant compared to the dhow. The dhow

drew ever closer to their boat without showing any signs of stopping, as though the two were hardly rowing the boat.

The dhow was larger than their little boat in every aspect, so the three of them had to crane their necks to look at it now that it was before them. The guards were already at the dhow's bow and they seemed to really be intending to show a 'Earthsplitter onto boat' technique once they got to the appropriate distance.

An idea popped up in Gu Fei's mind the moment he saw the guards arrange themselves into a leaping formation.

"Do you two know how to swim?" he asked.

The ladies nodded.

"Leap into the water the instant they unleash their attack!" he instructed.

"What about you?" the two asked him.

"I've got an idea," he replied.

The two ladies were unable to inquire further as the dhow finally got right up to their boat. Some of the guards onboard even had their feet off the deck; just as Gu Fei had expected, these guards would be using their Earthsplitter skill to leap even if they were in this kind of environment.

"Quickly jump!" Before this shout left his mouth, the two ladies were already leaping into the water from either side of the boat.

If the guards' Earthsplitter could even demolish a roof, how could this flimsy, little wooden boat withstand it? The first guard bore through the hull of the boat when he landed, penetrating through the wood with almost no resistance.

The second, third, and fourth guards were all lining up to leap as well.

Where was Gu Fei?

The two ladies leaped into the water while the first guard was

midair; Gu Fei, at that time, cast his Blink and appeared millimeters above the water nearby as he tossed out that sky hook he had readied in his hand.

Although he quickly plunged into the water in the next moment, his sky hook managed to snag the dhow's gunwale.

Gu Fei tightly clung onto that rope as he felt himself get dragged underwater. Holding his breath, he proceeded to climb up the rope.

If Gu Fei were onboard the boat, the guards would chase him to it; if he were in the water, they would pursue him in it. These guards' one-track mind was solely focused on accomplishing their task and would not show the slightest hesitation in their actions.

The guards continued to jump off their ship, albeit they were no longer targeting the boat but the spot where Gu Fei was: underwater.

They were still using Earthsplitter, yet none of them was able to land atop Gu Fei. He might be dangling on a rope in the water, but he was still moving.

Furthermore, the AOE damage of Earthsplitter was greatly weakened when applied on the water. After all, it was called Earthsplitter and not Watersplitter.

Gu Fei was beside himself with joy when he heard the consecutive splashes behind him. His plan worked perfectly; the guards were indeed as foolish as he had thought them to be.

Gu Fei finally swung himself to the side of the dhow. At the same time, he also managed to surface from the water. Gasping for air, he turned his head over to look. The guards demonstrated their superb swimming skills as they enthusiastically swam toward their target.

He ignored them as he finally got himself to the hull of the ship. Grasping the rope and planting his feet on the hull, he easily scaled

the side of the dhow. His nimble movement quickly got him halfway up. This was when he looked behind him again. The guards had also grab a hold of the rope Gu Fei used moments ago and began their ascent toward him.

“These guards are actually learning?” He was surprised. As soon as he completed the second half of the climb, he leaped aboard the ship and mercilessly cut off the rope.

A series of splashes could be heard as the guards plunged into the water once more. Gu Fei leaned over the gunwale and watched as the guards were unable to do anything, finally sighing in relief.

Gu Fei had initially been worried that the shameless system would allow these guards to step on the water and unleash their Earthsplitter skill. Thankfully, they were not programmed to do that. He was admiring the sight of the guards struggling helplessly in the water when he remembered that Vast Lushness and Xi Xiaotian might still be in the water.

He hurried over to the other side to take a look and saw that the two ladies were indeed still floating in the water!

“Over here!” he called out to the two ladies, thinking that the guards should be unable to understand such a simple signal like this.

The two ladies began to swim over to the dhow. Once they were near enough, he tossed a rope down and helped them up the dhow.

The first thing these two ladies did once they were on board was to run over to the other side of the dhow to watch the guards flop around in the water.

The mighty guards were actually in a rare situation where they could neither retreat nor advance. The three players took great pleasure in watching this. Bullying the system gave an even greater sense of achievement than bullying other players, as the system was considered to be an omnipotent god in a game!

“Uhm... How do we sail this boat?” The three began to search through the dhow after they were done gloating.

They quickly discovered the ship’s cabin.

“A steering wheel. Ha ha! This is going to make things easier.” Xi Xiaotian rushed over to commandeer it.

“Say, what do you think this vessel depends on to move?” Vast Lushness had a look of a scientist on her.

He pointed toward the sails that hung above their heads.

“But there’s no wind right now,” she said.

“You’ll be the one at a disadvantage if you attempt to talk logic with the system,” Gu Fei said. He then went over to the side of the dhow to once more admire the guards treading the water aimlessly. There was no way he would get tired looking at this scene!

At this same time, Xi Xiaotian made a breakthrough regarding the rudder of the ship and attained full control of the helm.

The three really enjoyed how shameless this system’s dhow was; they did not know what was causing it to move, but they were more than satisfied to see it constantly head forward.

Vast Lushness, who had climbed all the way up to crow’s nest of the dhow out of boredom, was now shouting to the two to join her.

The crow’s nest had a telescope, similar to a spyglass, attached to it.

“Look over there.” Vast Lushness pushed the spyglass to the other two as she pointed in a certain direction.

The two were able to make out the distant shadowy forms even without the assistance of the spyglass. Their experience of rowing a boat for an entire night allowed the two to identify those forms as little fishing boats that they were very familiar with. With the use of the spyglass, it became clearer that the five boats, with

players unevenly distributed across each, were heading in the direction of the land by this side.

“It’s those guys,” he announced after he used the spyglass.

“I’ll go change our course,” Xi Xiaotian excitedly cried out as she leaped off the crow’s nest.

“What for?” he shouted after her.

“To deal a decisive blow to the forces of evil!” The lady was already inside the cabin and was turning the dhow when she yelled this back.

“Look over here too.” Vast Lushness adjusted the angle of the spyglass and beckoned Gu Fei over.

Gu Fei crooked his neck and took a look, speechless.

It was the group of guards that they had abandoned in the water; they were currently swimming after Gu Fei and their dhow. He was extremely moved by the level of professionalism that they were demonstrating right now.

“One hundred eighty degrees turn; targets straight ahead!” Xi Xiaotian shouted from the cabin.

The dhow was cutting across the water crisply as it imposingly bore down on the five small, wooden boats.

Chapter 356 - Waves

The territorial waters of Linshui City stretched as far as the eyes could see. Gu Fei, as well as the two ladies, was onboard the dhow. With the guards swimming after them, their dhow sailed straight into the party of pirates in front of them. They might seem to be in a pinch, but these three were actually delighting at the prospect of colliding with the five boats.

The dhow was the true way to sail the winds and break the waves! There was no need to worry about those guards swimming after them; no matter how fast they swam, the dhow would always be out of their reach. As for the robbers in front of the three, their distance to them was getting closer with each passing moment.

When those players saw the dhow coming to receive them, each of them suspected that they were seeing things. The players from Linshui City were no stranger to this type of ship, as plenty of them were moored in the city piers. Players had no means of commandeering them, nor were there any quests that involved these dhows; simply put, they had never seen them in use before.

These players could not wrap their heads around why the dhow before them had left the harbor, much less why it had even travelled so far out here.

“Could we have stumbled on a hidden quest?” These bunch of players actually dreamed of such a serendipitous occasion happening to them.

Whatever the case might be, the ship was still heading on a crash course toward them. They simply could not afford to crash into it, so these five, small boats hurriedly rowed to scatter and give way to the dhow.

“They’ve scattered!” Vast Lushness announced this from the crow’s nest to Xi Xiaotian, who was steering the ship inside the cabin.

“Bearing!” Xi Xiaotian shouted.

“About ten degrees to the left!” Vast Lushness answered.

“Understood!” Xi Xiaotian shouted her acknowledgement.

Xi Xiaotian turned the ship accordingly. She was an amateur at this, though, so there was no way she could turn precisely ten degrees to the left. Similarly, Vast Lushness was not a professional navigator. Her shout of ‘ten degrees’ was a just rough estimation. This was why Vast Lushness immediately turned to shout, “Too much! You need to steer it back a little!”

Xi Xiaotian hurriedly turned the helm in the opposite direction in a hurry even as she asked, “How’s this?!”

Gu Fei, who was standing by the bow of the ship, witnessed these two ladies exchange words from above and below the ship. Their constant correction caused the ship to wobble from side to side as though it would split apart at any moment. When the bunch of players saw the dhow before them begin to shake left and right, they were unable to fathom what could be causing this. Some of them even went as far as to wonder what sort of super quest hint it was. Finally, a black-clothed Mage finally entered their line of sight.

“It’s that guy!” Almost everyone uttered this same cry at the same time.

Quickly, these men lost any good feeling about the dhow as they wondered how the Mage had managed to gain control of one of the dhows found in the harbor. These pirates had always been coveting those dhows. By the looks of things, this act had pretty much affirmed that it was possible for players could commandeer such vessels.

These pirates’ thoughts were focused on this matter despite the precarious situation they were in. Xi Xiaotian managed to steer the ship to imperiously rush toward these players. Although the dhow

was unable to crash into some of the boats head on, with the gap between these two types of watercrafts being akin to an elephant and an ant, just brushing any of the little boats to the side would instantly capsize it.

“Beautifully done!” Vast Lushness gave Xi Xiaotian a thumbs-up.

The dhow would bring along waves as it cut through the water, and just these waves alone were enough to violently rock the little boats. Three players immediately found themselves falling into the water when they failed to steady themselves or grab a hold of anything in time.

Xi Xiaotian continued to steer the dhow, knocking boats and people alike. These pirates had always been capitalizing on their familiarity with this type of environment to bully those unfamiliar with it, but they had unwittingly met an even stronger foe today. They simply had no trick or plans up their sleeves to bully the dhow, let alone take it for their own. Vast Lushness acted as the lookout on the crow’s nest, while Xi Xiaotian blindly steered the ship. Everything was so chaotic that the pirates were unable to remain on their boats. The unlucky ones were able to cling on to the side of their boats after falling into the water, but the unlucky ones were swept away by the waves to who knew where.

The dauntless guards had also caught up to the dhow at this point, but they ended up being tossed about by the waves Xi Xiaotian had been making with her excessive steering.

The players that ended up in the water were all miserable, while the three up on the dhow were now feeling tired as well after all their exertion. Xi Xiaotian was really too much of a newbie at this. How could this watercraft change direction so frequently like this? The waves she had unintentionally created tossed the players about. Meanwhile, given the size of the dhow’s hull, its collision with the small boats left them damaged them beyond repair.

Although Gu Fei had spent many grueling years training up his

lower body strength through kungfu, there was still a limit to how much could endure. His sense of balance had been thoroughly displaced that it only took a little fall to have him gliding around the deck with every movement. He would roll to the port side of the ship for a while before rolling to the starboard when the direction changed. He even found himself occasionally rolling up and down the deck laterally.

The situation with Xi Xiaotian in the cabin was somewhat different. She was tightly gripping the ship's steering wheel at first, but she eventually lost her grip of it during one of the more violent turns, causing her to slam at every hard surface in the room that left her feeling dizzy afterward.

The one who had it the worst was still Vast Lushness. She was standing at a pretty high place on the dhow so, at one of the more violent lurches of it, she was instantly thrown off it. Thankfully, she reacted quickly and managed to grab a hold of the platform. Her body was currently swaying with the motion of the rocking dhow, suffering immensely as she tried to hold on.

What made this hellish, however, was that everything was not over yet.

After all, this boat was powered by some unknown source that kept it constantly sailing straight ahead. The three did not know which direction this dhow's wheel ended up in, as it was simply turning around while the entire ship bobbed with the choppy waters rather intensely.

Gu Fei slid from the port side of the deck all the way to the starboard and from the bow of the ship all the way to the stern. If this were to continue, this sailboat would no longer be a sailboat but would likely become a [failboat](#), instead.

Right now, the most urgent matter for them was to steady the dhow's wheel and steer it back to the proper position. On the crow's nest, Vast Lushness was not in the state to give direction. It

would actually be considered a success if she could hold on and prevent herself from being flung off.

When it came to controlling the ship's wheel, this responsibility naturally landed on that lady Xi Xiaotian, who was still helpless bumping around the cabin like a bumper car.

Gu Fei continued to roll around the deck as he strove to look at the cabin's direction, wondering if the lady had knocked herself out and considered what measures should he take if that actually happened!

He was about to call out to Xi Xiaotian when one of his tumbles brought him near the cabin door. Coincidentally, this was when Xi Xiaotian's figure was hurtled out of the cabin and ended up colliding into him. Before either of them could say a word regarding this situation, the dhow once more violently lurched and they were tossed to two opposite directions.

Gu Fei could tell with a glance that it was useless to hope for Xi Xiaotian's recovery, and he had to depend on himself in this current situation. Therefore, as he slid all around the deck, he seized the opportunity the next time he was rolling near the cabin entrance again. He then took that moment to cast Blink and materialized inside the cabin.

Nonetheless, even inside the cabin, he would still be tossed around. Gu Fei proved to be more dexterous than Xi Xiaotian, so he managed to reach out and grab a hold of the ship's steering wheel. Extending his leg out as he stuck out his back, his legs were able to find purchase on the side wall and his body ran parallel to the ground.

"Bravo!" Gu Fei heard this cry at this very moment. He glanced outside the cabin entrance and saw Xi Xiaotian holding a thumbs-up at him; she coincidentally drifted past the cabin entrance.

With all the vigorous rocking the entire ship was currently undergoing, Gu Fei momentarily did not dare to do anything since

he did not know which direction was the correct one. Still, he did manage to steady the ship's wheel itself, so aside from bobbing with the motion of the waves, it finally stabilized in a certain heading direction. As long as he maintained this position, the situation should improve tremendously.

He leaped off the wall and back on to the floorboards as he kept his hands tightly on the ship's steering wheel. After determining that the bow of the ship was constantly listing to the left, he began to turn the ship in the opposite direction bit by bit.

The dhow was finally drifting in a straight line, and it soon steered out of this area with all the churning waves. Slowly, the ensuing bumps and waves became smaller and smaller. Xi Xiaotian finally stopped sliding around the deck and gingerly climbed to her feet.

She had been slipping and sliding and banging and knocking all over the ship's hard surface for such a long time. Though she was not dead from this, the entire experience had nevertheless left her lightheaded. Gu Fei did not dare to loosen his grip on the ship's steering wheel. He spotted Xi Xiaotian getting up from the deck and swaying unsteadily toward the ship's main mast. When she reached that part of the dhow, she climbed up, got herself on the crow's nest, and pulled up the still dangling Vast Lushness.

The two ladies sat down on the crow's nest as they sighed in relief. Neither had the strength say a word, so they just sent Gu Fei a message: "How are things?"

"Everything is fine. It's all under control," he answered. The ship was becoming steadier by the second.

"Where are the others?" he asked the two on the crow's nest.

He saw Vast Lushness shakily get up, raise the spyglass to her eyes, and look around.

"I can't see them anymore. Who knows where the waves have

thrown them?!” Vast Lushness answered. She kept surveying the area around them with the spyglass until she spotted two rows of boats drifting about.

“Let’s seize this opportunity to get on shore. Where’s the land?” he asked.

“Forty degrees to the left!” she answered.

“I’ll steer!” Xi Xiaotian seemed to have developed a passion for steering the ship.

“Don’t. It’s best you rest up for a while.” He still had a bit of lingering fear when he recalled the situation that they were in mere moments ago.

After Gu Fei successfully turned the ship around, they steadily made their way toward the harbor. Vast Lushness continued to carefully observe their surroundings before confidently saying, “I really can’t find anyone out there.”

“Forget about those guys. Those guards are sure to know our position; I reckon it won’t be long before they catch up to us,” Xi Xiaotian said.

“What do you mean catch up to us? They can’t possibly swim faster than a sailboat. We’ll only get further and further away from them,” Gu Fei refuted. He was rather amenable to the situation they were in, since it would give him more time to erase his troublesome PK points.

The dhow continued to sail toward land uneventfully.

Linshui City’s waterfront was filled with fine white sand like the one found in pristine beaches. The sun shone brightly as the unique aquatic monsters roamed about. This place looked to be an ideal spot for either level grinding or leisure gaming and it was considered as one of the places in Linshui City where players would often gather.

Although it was nearly the wee hours in the morning, everyone

was staring wide-eyed as they saw the dhow sail closer and closer. Just like those water bandits, they believed that this watercraft was the same as those immobile ships moored in the pier.

“Is it some kind of a special quest?” People by the shore were excitedly crowding round the shore, watching that dhow sail into the harbor.

Back in the ship’s cabin, Gu Fei was scratching his head as he asked the two ladies, “Do any of you know how to stop this ship?”

Author used a homonym pun here about how the sailboat (fanchuan) will become a capsized boat (fanchuan), so I went with ‘sail’ and ‘fail’, instead.

Chapter 357 - First-time Arrivals

More and more players gathered by the coastline and each of them stared at the dhow sailing nearer and nearer. If they knew that the player steering the ship had not found any means to stop it, they would surely regret their decision to welcome its arrival.

Reality was indeed cruel. Gu Fei never found any gear that worked like brakes in the cabin. Naturally, he got no answer when he asked the two ladies. Helpless, Gu Fei could only turn the dhow as much as he could toward one direction in order to avoid grounding the ship right on to the coast where many players were standing. Xi Xiaotian and Vast Lushness also tried to help; standing on the crow's nest, the two kept signaling the spectators by waving their arms about as they called out, "Make way! Make way!"

The crowd that had gathered by the coast was boisterous. Adding in the sound of the crashing waves and the strong breeze, no one could make out what the two ladies were shouting about. Still, their act of waving drew quite the attention from the crowd, with the Sharpshooters among them using Eagle Eye to look at the two ladies before excitedly announcing, "Babes!"

"Two babes!" someone added.

"What's going on!" everyone asked pressingly.

The crowd's curiosity only made them more excited, and no one moved to leave. In fact, many of them stepped closer to the shore as some fearlessly stepped into the water. These players became anxiously when they saw the dhow turning away from their location!

"The ship's trying to escape!" They pointed at the ship as they raced toward where Gu Fei was steering it to avoid running aground.

This was precisely what was meant from the old saying: 'A

punishment from the heavens can be avoided, but there is no salvation for those who provoke the disaster onto themselves.'

Gu Fei was already turning the ship's wheel as much as he could, and any more would send them back into the waters they just left. Seeing how passionate these players were, he felt that they would be far more disappointed if he turned back out at this point, so he let nature took its course, shouting to the two ladies as he exited the cabin, "Hey, come down and get ready to run. We are sure to be surrounded once we land!"

Gu Fei had plenty of experience being surrounded and scrutinized; that was why he had such a great understanding of this matter. Seeing this scene before him, there was no doubt in his mind that the ship would quickly be swarmed and surrounded by the crowd present.

"Coming!" Xi Xiaotian was the first to climb down.

"Hey!" He hurried Vast Lushness when he did not see her follow along. It seemed she was busy with something on the crow's nest.

"I'll be right there!" Vast Lushness answered. He saw her suddenly jerk her arm forcefully before she leaped off the crow's nest.

He heard the peng sound and saw Vast Lushness land jaw-first before she cast Heal on herself. Seeing that she was now holding something in her left hand, he was speechless. This lady had apparently broken off the spyglass that was originally fixed on the crow's nest.

"Quickly flee!" Xi Xiaotian had climbed down to the deck by now. The two ladies began to run toward the ship's stern. After running for several steps, they realized that Gu Fei was still standing where he was.

"Quickly jump and we'll swim ashore! Do you really wish to be surrounded!" The two beckoned him.

“No, no, no!” It was rare for Gu Fei to be anxious. “I don’t know how to swim.”

“But I have Blink,” he calmly added, “so you two should make your move first!”

The two ladies did not dawdle and quickly dashed toward the stern. By now, they could already feel that they were reaching shallow waters as the ship was no longer as buoyant as before. It even started to grind against the seashore’s sand. Leaping any later might cause them to eat a mouthful of turgid sand, instead.

Although Gu Fei did not intend to jump into the water, he also made his way toward the stern of the dhow just as the ladies dived into the water to the left and right respectively.

Water splashed as they plunged into it. Moments later, their heads surfaced and they waved their hands to him.

By now, the dhow was already shaking violently. The dhow became a lot less stable once it got closer to land. He had his one hand on the handrail as his other waved back toward the ladies. He then watched the two swim toward the shore.

Gu Fei was on the deck holding on to the hand railing for dear life as the ship violently rocked. The players below did not see him – partly because they were busy discussing just what could have prompted the two beautiful ladies to jump down from the crow’s nest. What kind of situation would cause one to climb down and the other to leap off like that?

Among the players awaiting the ship’s arrival, some realized that something was not right. How would such a large ship like this stop? While Gu Fei and the ladies were unable to think of how, plenty of players in the crowd knew.

How could one stop the ship? With an anchor, of course.

The astute Sharpshooters among the crowd already realized that the anchor of the ship was still hanging by its side, completely

without any signs of being dropped despite the closeness of the dhow to the coast. Those experienced sailors could tell that the ship was already considered as beached and that only inertia was causing it to move forward still.

No one knew who it was that screamed, but the crowd began to flee from the area upon hearing it. Nevertheless, a few slow-witted players continued to look at the crow's nest, trying to make sense of the two ladies' actions. What were the two ladies trying to say when one of them jumped off while another climbed down?

It was these players that were hit the worst when the ship came crashing in.

Those who had been knocked over were considered rather lucky; the ones who had it worse were those that got pinned down under the dhow. This was only possible thanks to the soft sand found on the beach. At first, some did not realize this as they crowded around the grounded ship and sighed in awe. Only when some players among the crowd rushed out and cried out for help to break the hull, did the others realize that some people must have gotten stuck underneath the dhow. These pinned-down players crazily fired off messages asking for aid to their friends.

“Whoa! They aren't dead yet?” Everyone exclaimed in shock.

“Yes, how miraculous!” a black-clothed Mage among them confirmed.

The players looked at this Mage incredulously. None of them had any impression of there being anyone standing where he was just now.

“Don't just stand there and look; quickly come up with a solution!” the black-clothed Mage said. He then squeezed his way out of the crowd as though he were ‘searching for a solution’.

The surrounding players cared not for the poor fools that had got pinned under the ship; frankly speaking, they were more

concerned about the whereabouts of the two babes that they had spotted on the crow's nest moments ago. This concern was not solely because of the two's enviable beauty but because the two were the only ones seen on the ship as it came in. The two ladies might be able to provide the important clues they needed if this was anything like a quest.

While a portion of the players attempted to find a way to save the pinned-down players, many more focused their efforts on finding out how to get on the deck meters above them.

Meanwhile, that black-clothed Mage, who had already made his way out of the crowd, quickly headed to a secluded corner to observe everything from afar. After quite a while, he finally spotted the two ladies sneakily making their way out.

That black-clothed Mage was of course Gu Fei. No one noticed that he was also onboard the dhow, so he managed to blend into the crowd of onlookers with his Blink. Many might have felt something off about his sudden appearance among them, but he knew that none of them would connect him to the ship.

After taking a huge detour, the two ladies, who looked exceptionally bedraggled, finally rendezvoused with Gu Fei. Xi Xiaotian once more had her cloak on, making her look no more than a shadowy figure as she beckoned the two to hurry.

Besides Linshui City being surrounded by water, the city did not have any distinguishing features like Linyin City. While it was a fortress built on an island, its architecture looked similar to the other in-game cities.

"I'm off to erase my PK value!" he bid the two ladies goodbye.

"I'll go and polish this spyglass a bit." The spyglass's connector was broken off when Vast Lushness forcefully pried it off the crow's nest, making it uneven and uncomfortable to hold.

"See you two later." Xi Xiaotian did not mention what she was

about to do. The three went their separate ways under the city gate. Gu Fei asked for directions toward the Bounty Assignment Hall from the passersby; Vast Lushness inquired where the players maintained sundry stalls; Xi Xiaotian... She took off somewhere unknown.

The three were already going about their business, yet the incident that they had instigated was far from over.

The players by the coast were busy. Some were digging a pit in the sand, while others formed up steps in the hole. After a short while, the dhow that was stuck in the sand lost its stability and collapsed on its side magnificently. This was very sudden. Thus, while they managed to rescue the ones trapped beneath the ship, even more unlucky individuals standing on that side got pinned down. Many of them even lost their lives this time. At the same time, every player present realized that not a soul was onboard the ship.

Was this a supernatural event? Everyone was inexplicably horrified.

All of them continued to ponder on, study, and investigate....

The first few people who discovered something were the Sharpshooters with Eagle Eye. They pointed toward the water and asked, “Look. What’s that?”

Quickly after, all the Sharpshooters began to sound off in awe as the other players anxiously waiting for them to explain their reaction.

By the time every player present finally saw what it was all about, a new round of discussion had already begun.

Countless Linshui City guards were swimming toward the shore – it was a phenomenon worth uncovering.

“What sort of quest is this? Such extravagance!” They were all visibly excited.

Everyone stared as the first guard made it to the shore. Everyone controlled their urge to clap as they watched that guard's every move.

The guard did not actually do anything special, merely continuing to run as it transitioned seamlessly from swimming.

The onlookers were ignored by the guard who continued to run ahead unperturbed. Players who wished to hold him back and ask questions were trampled by that guard without losing a beat.

The second... third... fourth... The guards kept making their way to the shore. The players did not know that these guards were related to the incident of the ship running aground, as each of these NPCs did not even look toward the ship's direction and merely did the same sequence of actions: get on the shore and run off. Anyone who tried to physically block their advancement was simply trampled on.

There were still guards swimming toward their location even when the first guard made it into the city.

What was going on exactly? Many players were mystified by this, yet they still could not make sense of anything.

Between trailing after these guards or continue to see what other things would come ashore, these players found it hard to choose, either.

Gu Fei, who was clueless on how this event had troubled the onlookers, already completed two 'Bounty Mission' and just picked up a target worth 2 PK points. Completing this task would mean that his PK value would once more be below 30 points.

Chapter 358 - Conditioned Reflex

Gu Fei was euphoric once he got the ‘Bounty Mission’ that would help bring his PK value below 30 points. Actually, what made him really elated was the prospect that he could log off once he completed this mission.

While Gu Fei had a lot of fun playing Parallel World, as it had allowed him to enjoy utilizing his kung fu for fighting, he was always prudent when controlling his play time. Actually, with the job he held and the kind of lifestyle he had, he could easily find more time to play the game, but he never did take the plunge. He always made sure to play the game for no more than two or three hours a day and to log off after he enjoyed himself fighting with kung fu.

However, ever since he began following Traversing Four Seas on this expedition, Gu Fei had repeatedly broken his self-imposed time limit for staying online. This was out of his hands, though. The game world had its rules; there were times where he had to abide by it. Otherwise, it would be truly difficult to continue living in on this VR world.

Gu Fei could not help but think of the saying: ‘A man in Jianghu is no longer in control of his fate.’

He was not even in the real Jianghu but just some damnable game, yet there were several things he had to do because he had no other choice.

Just take this current situation as an example; if he could not take this chance to erase his PK value while the guards were still out in the sea, he would have to do what he did yesterday, and that was to first log off and deal with the problem the next day....

Gu Fei did not believe he would be fortunate enough to have another crowd of onlookers interfering just like today in the future. He seriously doubted if he could clear his PK points while

the guards were chasing him and decided against taking such a risk. Thus, he thought it would be best for him to grab this chance and erase some of his PK value until it was below 30 points.

Coming to this decision, Gu Fei decided to extend his gaming session. Considering that his PK value would be down to 29 points once he completed this newly obtained mission, he was already considering himself to be well and safe at this point.

Whistling in a carefree manner, he glanced at the indicated coordinates before pushing the door of the Bounty Assignment Hall to exit the building.

A strong gust welcomed him.

This was the strongest gust of wind Gu Fei had ever experienced since he started playing the game.

At this same moment, he utilized his kung fu capability to the fullest for the first time since entering Parallel World.

Dodging this gust of wind was a reaction he barely registered – a conditioned reflex born out of tempering his body from a young age by spending his every waking moment practicing kung fu; he even dreamed of it when asleep.

This sort of conditioned reflex, which was imprinted on to every inch of his body, played a crucial role in this instant.

Even Gu Fei was unaware that he had reacted.

What a fast reaction!

Unfortunately, no matter how quick his reaction speed was, there was a huge difference between facing a surprise attack and an expected assault. Furthermore, his actions did not become quicker just because his body reflexes set in.

It could not be helped. He was still in Parallel World, after all, so his speed, just like the other players, would always be determined by stats. While his conditioned responses and reflex allowed him to

react as quickly as he could, but no matter how quick he registered his thoughts, this movement was still bound by his stat allocation if he were to execute it accordingly.

While Gu Fei was fast due to his current stat point distribution, he was still slower against a sudden attack that could bring forth such a strong gust of wind. Even if he were to possess superhuman reaction speed and judgment, there was no way he could have completely avoiding all of this attack.

Managing to avoid a portion of the attack meant that a part of him still got hit.

Gu Fei lost his balance, but he did not fall.

As long as it was possible, he would never fall.

Although that gust of wind dropped his HP to the red, he still managed to stay upright despite having to take several steps backward to do so.

The second gust was already on him.

This time, however, he was prepared, and his reaction was no slower than before, so he was able to dodge the attack in its entirety. Simultaneously, he was able to identify who his attacker was: NPC guard.

The NPC guards were indeed as unrestrained as Gu Fei had pegged them to be. These two slashes were just basic attacks, yet the speed and strength contained within were unlike anything he had ever seen.

This sort of attack was even more difficult to manage than their Earthsplitter skill.

Earthsplitter required its user to leap into the air, land, and take the appropriate pose; time would be wasted as each step was executed accordingly. In comparison, a basic attack was just a swing of the sword. The damage, AOE, and relevant stats behind it were nowhere as powerful as a skill, but it was a lot crispier,

cleaner, and more accurate.

The simplest of moves was often the most efficient.

This terminology that kung fu practitioners would often mention was actually reflected in the guard's actions right now.

Gu Fei was indeed a true maestro as he was still able to grasp the intricacies of the current situation.

This was just a d*mn AI; there was no way it could possess such level of kung fu mastery. Only one explanation would suffice as to how it was able to create such an effect: the gap in strength between this NPC and him was simply too wide.

With such a huge disparity between the two, complex moves would be redundant. Perhaps, the damage would still be the same when applied, yet it would be nowhere as efficient as a simple move.

Such a complex idea had only flashed through his mind for a fleeting moment when the enemy's third attack came on him again.

A slash. Another one. Another one.

This was the third attack the guard had dished out toward him. Besides the suddenness of the first attack, which he could not fully defend from, he was successful in evading the other two that followed. He was even a little excited after observing the situation he was in.

There was only one guard before him!

Gu Fei could easily understand how this had come to be. Who would have any idea where the choppy waves would bring them to? Therefore, their subsequent journey toward his location from different places meant that some would reach him earlier than the rest. This NPC had been the first to make it to him, but the other guards were quite possibly still adrift back in the sea.

He might not be entirely defenseless against a guard.

Gu Fei was confident, ignoring the fact that his HP was already in the red and that even the slightest touch from the guard would likely send him to his grave.

The fourth slash from the guard arrived shortly after.

It was a strike that brought along buffeting wind.

Just as how the Saint Seiyans would put it: “The same move won’t work on us twice!”

Gu Fei might not be a Saint Seiyan, but this was already the fourth slash he had faced. He already started to counterattack the moment the guard raised his arm to attack.

The sword came crashing down on him with the strong wind gust, yet he had already dodged to the side.

“Twin Incineration!” He widely cleaved downward.

The clanking of metal resounded when his sword made contact with the guard’s shield just like when he had clashed with the guards before. With the NPC guards having a ridiculously fast hand speed, their reaction time would surely be nothing slower.

Gu Fei did not recover his strike, though. His sword swept across the shield with a flick of his wrist, transforming this side cut to the shield into a pierce as he immediately punctured the guard’s waist.

“Incinerate!” He finally completed the incantation at this point.

The system for spell-casting in Parallel World allowed the caster to space the initial chant that called forth the spell and the activation command to a certain degree. The usual Mages that focused on ranged attack would not think too much about this aspect of spell-casting, but for a close-combat Mage like Gu Fei, this design let his attack become even more prodigious.

A kung fu move was nothing as simple as the slash from the guard.

Every move withheld the potential to adapt and transform accordingly with numerous follow-ups. What was more; humans would surely not be as rigid when it came to their thinking like the AIs, so there was no need to say just how tricky Gu Fei's one strike was.

This sword stroke that he had delivered made use of a simple transformation. To find this gap in its defense and critically injure the NPC, he fooled it into raising its shield to defend. Adding the spell incantation at the same time, he was able to deal an indomitable attack of his own.

When that guard took that sword into himself and it angrily cleaved an attack toward him, he once more dodged to the side. He then reached out his left hand and electricity arched in wild brilliance.

Palm of Thunder.

Gu Fei had not seriously unleashed this skill in combat before.

This skill allowed its user to gather lightning at the center of his or her palm and to unleash it into a palm-sized attack with one thrust. Simply put, it could be used as a lightning spell that directly shot out in a straight line.

Moreover, besides the spell's ability to be fired off from a different location unlike the other lightning spells, this skill had another unique aspect.

It needed to be unleashed with an open palm. However, if a Mage kept his magic staff when casting the spell, the subsequent Spell Damage would be significantly reduced. The game designers considered this point and, thus, included an additional condition: It must be cast with the non-dominant hand.

Actually, it had another unique feature, and that was the fact that lightning needed to accumulate in the user's palm first. This particular aspect was incongruent with the characteristics of other

lightning spells, which were nearly instantaneous when cast, so it was considerably stronger than the average spells from the Lightning Affinity tree.

Still, this spell was not so powerful that it could annihilate the heavens. In truth, the spell was not a special skill and was merely a reward for a level 40 quest, and finding it in the market was easy.

However, any spell would need reevaluation once it fell into the hands of Gu Fei. While Palm of Thunder was considered to be a ranged attack, it actually became a close-ranged attack when he was the one using it.

Focusing the lightning in the palm and delivering that single palm strike at the perfect moment....

Gu Fei's kung fu was not merely limited to just weapons; he had mastery over many palm, fist, and kick styles, too. This one palm strike he did was equally as precise and simple as a slash of a sword.

The moment his palm connected to the guard, he unleashed Palm of Thunder. Being a ranged attack did not mean its damage would be weakened just because the caster was at close range. Numerous monsters fell to this one strike when he was experimenting with it.

Gu Fei's usage of this skill attached a new value to this spell.

With his dominant hand dealing Twin Incineration from his Moonlit Nightfalls, and his non-dominant hand blasting forth Palm of Thunder in close range, Gu Fei's close-combat Mage strongly resembled a Berserker's Dual-wielding Mastery. And to top it off, his non-dominant hand attack was not subjected to any damage reduction at all.

Chapter 359 - Killing with a Borrowed Knife

Crackling in blinding sparks, Gu Fei sent his Palm of Thunder toward the guard's waist the moment he finished concentrating on his left hand. Just like any other lighting spells, the sound effect for this one was deafening as it created a shaft of electricity that arced forth. He thought to himself how disappointing it would be if the guard did not fall to the ground, considering how spectacular the visual effects for this spell were.

Obviously, the guard did not collapse to the ground so easily and it even quickly retaliated with a slash of its sword. Gu Fei turned his body to dodge the attack, and at the moment that he was about to counterattack, the guard used a skill. It was this one skill that caused him to feel the futility of challenging the guard, as he would have no way of achieving victory over an NPC with it.

This skill was something he had seen being used by unscrupulous players many times before: Holy Healing.

Silver Moon had used this same skill when Young Master's Elite group was up against Silver Moon group in the mercenary PvP tournament. It was a level 40 skill that Knights had access to once they advanced their job class into a Holy Knight. It had about the same efficacy as a Priest's Heal but had a slight dissimilarity.

A Priest's Heal worked on all job classes indiscriminately. Be it bestowing on other players or themselves, the effect of the spell was entirely the same.

As for a Holy Knight's Holy Healing, its greatest effect was when used on themselves and next was when it was used on a fellow Holy Knight; using it on other job classes would see a huge reduction in its efficacy. Further testing showed that Holy Healing had zero effect on the two advance job classes of Assassins and Hunters and that using it on Dark Knights or Dark Priests would actually deal damage to them instead.

Holy Healing was the only current skill that had many different effects depending on the type of recipient.

After the guard's sword hit empty air, it instantly raised its shield and white light came forth from it before dispersing. The pose was somewhat different from how players did it, but any sharp-eyed players could tell that the guard had just unleashed the Heal skill.

How could Gu Fei fight on at this rate?

Against the Werewolves, Gu Fei was still able to use Sacred Flames of Baptism to nullify their regeneration. This guard, meanwhile, had a skill that let it instantly recover its HP.

Could he interrupt the casting?

Gu Fei attacked to see if that would work.

Gu Fei unleashed two successive attacks powered by spells, and when the guard looked as though it was about to cast Heal on itself again, he hurriedly stabbed it with his sword. According to the system rules, Heal was a sustained spell that could be interrupted when the user was attacked during casting. This stab he dealt was quick. In the best case scenario, his attack would interrupt the sword if it managed to connect to the guard.

In the end, the guard raised its shield to block his sword while lifting its weapon high, resulting into a glorious flash of white light that scattered from the blade.

The shield that blocked Gu Fei's slash was pulled back to its body, as the guard finished basking in the white light with nary a point of HP lost.

"I'm impressed!" Gu Fei flashed the guard a thumbs-up and no longer bothered to fight it, turning tail to flee.

There was really no way to triumph over the NPC when the system was this shameless.

The guard's Heal appeared to have the powerful effect of a Priest

and the speed of a Holy Knight's Holy Healing. Gu Fei wondered now if he could interrupt the guard's casting by spitting on its face.

Whatever the case might be, he still managed to garner the respect and admiration of the nearby players with that exchange. Against the tyrannical guards sent by the system, just what sort of god would be able to last several rounds against it and retaliate a number of times that the guard would be forced to use its healing skill twice!

As the players were thinking of this, Gu Fei unexpectedly stopped fighting the guard and fled.

The emotions of these players instantly turned sour. They thought that he was a hero, but he was actually just a sloppy worker¹.

Gu Fei bounded away in a trail of dust with that guard closely pursuing him. He actually felt really frustrated at the moment, as he had used up all his mana in that fight without considering a backup plan. Thus, he hatefully griped about the system's shameless use of the healing skills. Had he known that this would be the result of fighting the guard, he would have at least reserved enough mana to use Blink!

Right now, the distance between the two parties was no more than three meters. The guard would gain a bit on him by a few centimeters with every step, so running was by no means a solution. How he missed the nosiness of the crowd right now. However, a brief glance at those players watching his fight with the guard just then made him realize that no intervention would be originating from them this time just from the way they eyed him disdainfully.

What was more was that he did not know where the nearest log-off point was located in Linshui City. The guard was sure to catch up to him if he continued to run wildly through the streets like this. Turning his focus on a way to extricate him from his current

predicament, his last hope appeared in the form of the ‘Bounty Mission’ he had just obtained.

Gu Fei, who was racing against time, was overjoyed when he checked the current target’s coordinates with his Windchaser’s Emblem. The target was actually very close to his location, and he would probably bump into the person at the next intersection.

He bowed his head and madly sprinted forward. A player appeared to the intersection several steps later, his serial number floating above his head. However, this person was not coming toward Gu Fei but was instead turning in the same direction he also happened to be heading.

Realizing this would take some time, Gu Fei looked over his shoulder, saw the danger closing in on him, and decided to take a risk.

He hollered, “Hey, bro! You there in front! Wait up!”

Countless players were ahead, and each of them looked backward when they heard his shout, but none of them saw someone they recognized. However, they easily registered the eye-catching scene of Gu Fei fleeing from the pursuing guard. This was considered a monstrous crime – an offence that most players did not have the guts to commit.

Everyone craned their necks to look, wondering just who Gu Fei was shouting at.

The fact that his target also stopped his steps was enough for Gu Fei to celebrate, but he was afraid that that was not enough to get his attention, so he pointed directly to the man and said, “Wait up, bro! Mission!”

“Me?” The man pointed to himself.

“Yes, you!” Gu Fei nodded his head vigorously.

“You’re not being pursued but is actually on a mission?” Everyone was surprised.

“What sort of mission is this? I’ve never seen it before,” plenty of players muttered.

Some even got near to Gu Fei’s bounty target as they nudged their eyebrows with interest. “Hey, bro. What sort of mission is this?”

“I don’t know, either!” The man was nonplussed.

While this conversation was going, Gu Fei had already made it to the man. This person innocently gazed at him as he asked, “What mission are you talking about?”

Gu Fei felt somewhat reluctant to strike when he saw the look of naivety on his face. However, he easily cleared past this mental block as he announced the answer to the player, “‘Bounty Mission’.” Compared to the other times where he would announce this with laudable temerity, Gu Fei sounded all kinds of detestable right now.

The expression on everyone who heard this changed drastically.

The man was naturally aware that he had PK value on him. The man almost fainted when he heard Gu Fei’s answer, but he was shocked by this man’s act of yelling at him to stop before rushing over to kill him off. He had never met anyone who would do ‘Bounty Mission’ in such a manner.

Gu Fei’s sword had already lashed out by this point.

He was already out of mana at this point. The cost of using Twin Incineration and Palm of Thunder twice was enough to drain him entirely. He could not even cast Thunderbolt or Fireball at this point and all he could do was to unleash basic attacks. To make matters worse, it just so happened that this target Gu Fei had gotten was a Warrior with plenty of HP and was by no means as defenseless as a Priest

Gu Fei whipped his sword out as he took a quick glance behind him. The guard also had his sword raised at the same time... Given

how he had no means to insta-kill the Warrior in front of him, this meant that he was now stuck in a one-versus-two fight. This was now a fight that required his fullest concentration.

He reminded himself of this as he continued to lift the sword in his hand before he froze momentarily. He turned his head backward once more. His head turned back and forth between the two....

Two guards? He felt lightheaded for a moment.

He was certain that the guard was behind him. It would definitely attack him pronto if it managed to catch up to him.

However, this one before him... This was definitely still the player who was his bounty target, but this Warrior actually had a shield in his left hand and a sword in his right hand, and was even dressed just like a guard.

Did this player have the strength to dress like this, or was he just cosplaying? Gu Fei had no time to ponder on this because the Warrior had already struck.

Charge! It was the skill that Warriors always used to begin any PvP. However, this Warrior had actually placed his shield before him as he used Charge.

It was not that Gu Fei had never seen Guardians used Charge with their shields held before them, but those Guardians would not often have a sword in their non-dominant hand. Dual-wielding Mastery was a Berserker skill; Guardians did not have access to that skill.

This Warrior had a shield up and a sword hidden behind it, bringing in an attack while defending. There could only be one meaning to this; this player was not an average player but was an expert, instead.

Initially, Gu Fei did not take this person seriously, thinking that the NPC was the one he should guard against.

But the moment this man revealed this attack, Gu Fei knew he would have difficulty evading his attack than the guard's sword slash.

Whether the sword would poke out from the left and right of the shield would change things immensely, impacting his decision on which direction to dodge.

Uncertain if it was going left or right, he decided not to chance it. He halted his attack and suddenly stooped low and rolled.

No one could fully describe just how fast his roll was. This roll was not just a casual roll but something he had trained and had a certain level of profundity. Only by grasping every aspect of this would anyone be able to roll like how he did in a fast yet dashing way.

The Warrior had naturally not seen such a fluid roll as well.

He only saw the person before him suddenly disappear. Thinking that the Mage had squatted down, he hurriedly pressed his shield lower. However, Gu Fei had already rolled past his feet.

“F*ck me! What sort of shameless fighting style is that?!” This person had plenty of battles that notched his belt, and he had never seen someone do something like this. He could only react instinctively by plunging his sword down toward Gu Fei. The sword was perfectly positioned for a forward thrust, so for him to suddenly plunge it downward like this, it made the attack extremely uncomfortable and awkward.

In the end, before his sword could shoot out, he already received a heavy blow right on to his head.

Following this, dizziness and nausea overwhelmed him. He lifted his head to look and saw the guard with its sword raised. It was not looking at him but at the shameless man by his feet.

“I’m terribly sorry!” He did not know when the shameless man had rolled right under his feet. The Mage leaped to his feet and

patted his shoulders when he said this.

He turned around and was about to say something, but he felt a breeze waft through his neck accompanied by a shaft of lightning flash.

He was truly quite indomitable to have survived the guard's one slash. However, with what little HP he had left, an attack that procced the additional magic attack was all that was needed to send this poor Warrior into prison without even making head or tail of what had just happened.

"Hmm... That might have been a little too despicable." Gu Fei sighed. Borrowing the guard's attack to take down this Warrior, Gu Fei patted his Windchaser's Emblem and disappeared instantly.

Chapter 360 - A Friend

With his PK value once more down to 29 points, he was pretty much safe from the pursuit guards as long as he kept himself out of their line of sight. Teleporting himself back to the Bounty Assignment Hall with the use of Windchaser's Emblem, Gu Fei entered the establishment and gingerly asked for the location of the nearest spawn point before running off toward it to log out.

In the meantime, the other mercenaries of Young Master's Elite were enjoying a short break in one of Linshui City's taverns.

"Miles isn't here yet? He should've reached the city by now, right? I'll send him a message!" Brother Assist was still talking when he saw Gu Fei's name suddenly dim – a clear indication that the man had logged off.

"Tut tut tut!" Although Gu Fei was not around, those present still derided his practice of logging off early.

"Why isn't your friend here yet?" War Without Wounds asked as he leaned his neck out toward the tavern doors after he finished ridiculing Gu Fei. He seemed to really be looking forward to this meeting.

"I'll ask again." Brother Assist sent out another message, yet his expression changed with that.

"What happened?" the other four men asked.

"He's not in a serviceable area..." he answered in a daze.

The four men were astounded by his reply.

"To actually send such an expert to prison, only one person I know is capable of doing that," Brother Assist carefully said.

"That's not necessarily true. It's difficult to take on four men with just two hands, after all. No hero can survive a mob. We're aware of how strong Miles is, yeah? I say if we all work together...

that... We should be able to stand a chance!" War Without Wounds said.

"TSK!" All of them expressed their heaviest contempt toward War Without Wounds. As peak experts in their own rights, they did not wish to share a table with him for saying something that lacked confidence.

"Since he's in prison, let's just go there to visit him," Sword Demon suggested.

"Let's!" Brother Assist got up.

"Who's paying the fee for the prison visit? Who?!" War Without Wounds and Royal God Call hurriedly asked aloud.

"He will!" Young Master Han pointed his finger over to the door before turning it into a wave, "Guild Leader Oathless."

"Oh, you guys are here as well!" Oathless Sword just happened to walk into the tavern with his fellow brother Gale Force. After extricating everyone out of the quagmire that they got themselves in back in Linyin City, Oathless Sword started to look favorably on Young Master's Elite. The ferry ride was rather uneventful and gave them plenty of chances to bond. Oathless Sword even went as far as to express his concern for Gu Fei's safety and well-being.

"What are you doing here, Guild Leader Oathless?" Young Master Han enthusiastically addressed him.

Oathless Sword happily came to them. "We've only arrived at the city, so I figured it's best to walk around and try to get a better hand of the situation."

"The tavern is indeed a good place to gather information." Young Master Han nodded.

"Of course," Oathless Sword happily agreed, "have you gentlemen been here for long?"

"We just got here ourselves, but we're planning to head out and

visit a friend,” Young Master Han shared.

“A friend?” Oathless Sword muttered to himself, feeling rather surprised by this new information. These gentlemen before him were peak experts in their respective fields in MMOs, after all. Anyone that they would make an effort to visit would surely be quite the character!

“We’ll leave you to your business then, Guild Leader Oathless. We’ll take our leave first!” Young Master Han gestured for the others to get up.

As the five stood up, one even passionately said, “Great! Guild Leader Oathless can take our seats!” With that, these men slowly made their way toward the exit. Their hearts were filled with expectations as they figured out Young Master Han’s intention.

“Hey, gentlemen!” Oathless Sword caught up to them before they stepped out.

The five men turned their heads over to innocently regard him.

“What’s the matter?” Young Master Han was naturally the one with the most clueless and innocent expression among them.

“It seems I won’t find anything useful here, so why don’t I follow you guys to meet your friend? Get rowdy with everyone?” Oathless Sword suggested.

“I don’t think meeting him will be a problem, but I’m afraid we won’t be able to get rowdy at all,” Young Master Han said.

“Why not?” Oathless Sword was perplexed.

“Because our friend is currently in prison,” Young Master Han replied.

“Ah...” Oathless Sword was shocked. Since this friend of theirs was in prison, it would be odd for strangers to visit him. This also implied that the person might not be someone outstanding. Oathless Sword was contemplating this matter when Young

Master Han suddenly quipped, “But I do agree that Guild Leader Oathless should visit this friend of ours.”

“Oh, just who is this guy?” Oathless Sword asked.

“Come. Let’s discuss this matter on our way there,” Young Master Han invited.

“Guild Leader Oathless, don’t you think that our trip from Linyin City over to Linshui City had been a little strange?” Young Master Han immediately changed the topic once he started speaking on their way over.

Oathless Sword could not make sense of this sudden query, so he could only answer accordingly, “Is something the matter?”

“Look.” Young Master Han began to breakdown the matter to him. “From Yunduan City till Yueye City, we faced the eroded Oolong Mountain Range with a pack of Mountain Bandits blocking our way forward at the end. From Yueye City to Baishi City, there were Werewolves that were supposed to act as our roadblock. Then, on our trip from Baishi City to Linyin City, we became the targets of Deep Waters and his men’s competitive quest. Based on these three incidents, we can say that every city has a sort of stage for us to clear. The first three times happened on our journey to the next city. This time, our trip from Linyin City to Linshui City did not even have any event cropping up....”

“That’s true. In that case...” Oathless Sword was beginning to have an idea as to what Young Master Han was getting at.

“If nothing happens even until we leave Linshui City, won’t that mean that our trip from Linyin City to here is devoid of any trial from the system? Do you think that the system is considerate enough to give us a free pass here?” Young Master Han asked.

“Of course not!” Oathless Sword immediately spat. Everyone was well aware of just how shameless the system in Parallel World was, so none of them was foolish enough to think that anything it did

would be beneficial to them.

“Following that line of thinking, then something is bound to happen the moment we retrieve Todd from the prison and leave Linshui City?” Oathless Sword asked.

Young Master Han nodded solemnly.

“That must be the case!” Oathless Sword furrowed his brows and bit on his nails.

“So I suggest you come with us to meet our friend,” Young Master Han said.

“What do you mean?” they five did not mention the identity of this friend of theirs. Now that the topic had rounded back to this, Oathless Sword was a little unclear what they meant.

“We believe our friend can help you as long as it involves Linshui City,” Young Master Han answered.

“Oh!” Oathless Sword somewhat got what he meant. It sounded as if this person were the tyrant in this part, just like him in Yunduan City. Oathless Sword would also be the ideal candidate to help foreigners if they were to come to Yunduan City looking for something.

“I got it. Let’s go, then!” Oathless Sword hurried.

The seven players quickened their pace and quickly arrived at Linshui City’s prison.

“How many of you?” After filling out the form for prison visit, the guard asked for their headcount.

“Seven.” Brother Assist turned to look, as if to double check the count as he reached for his coin pouch.

“Hey, hey, hey! How can you do this? Let me!” Oathless Sword rushed forward to stop the Dark Knight. Young Master Han turned his head to the side at this very moment, revealing a delighted smile.

Reaching this point, the men from Young Master's Elite somewhat felt guilty at this. Oathless Sword was not exactly a miser and was in fact quite an honorable person. He just happened to be the leader of a large guild Traversing Four Seas, so he often behaved in a somewhat arrogant or overbearing manner, making it difficult for people to tolerate him.

However, at this moment, Oathless Sword was not trying to be snobbish and was actually humbly offering to shoulder the fee for the prison visit. Faced with such a forthright person, they ended up forgetting themselves as they vied for the honor of paying the fee.

Everyone waved their coin pouches about in their eagerness to pay, yet none was able to emerge as the ultimate victor in this struggle. Sword Demon eventually shrank to a corner and said, “Enough. Let’s all pay for ourselves, then!”

“That won’t do! Let me!” Oathless Sword took advantage of everyone’s momentary shock to shove his coin pouch into the prison guard’s hand.

Naturally, the prison guard did not care for whom the coins belonged. As long as the amount was right, all of them could visit a prisoner.

Stepping into the prison, the seven players instantly knew that this trip was not a waste. Although Linshui City looked the same as the other in-game cities, it was actually hiding an unexpected uniqueness.

Linshui City’s prison was actually a dungeon!

The passageway that the seven men were currently in was actually above each cell. The cell was entirely walled off, with the metal grating placed on the ceiling of each cell. All the convicted players were beneath the seven men’s feet right now.

The seven men lowered their heads and found yet another

unique feature. The level of the water in each cell was actually adjusted in accordance to the players' height. No matter who was inside the cell, the water would stop right at their chest level. This could be said to be one outstanding aspect of this VR game. If this were a real-life dungeon, it would be immensely difficult to adjust the water level for each individual.

The seven of them hurriedly passed several cells, only seeing a handful of players jailed. It could be seen just how powerfully sapping this experience was for the players, causing the PK incident in the city to be relatively low.

Nobody should mistakenly believe that a stint of being submerged in this dungeon was as comfortable as lying in a bathtub filled with warm water. There should be no need to mention just how terrible it was to soak in the water for several hours. What was worse was that the prisoner could not sit down while inside the dungeon, much less lie down. This was precisely what made this dungeon horrifying.

As there were few prisoners in the dungeon, the seven men quickly located Brother Assist's friend.

Obviously, just like the other convicts that were soaked in the water, Brother Assist's friend wore a glum expression on his face. Even when he saw them, his grim expression remained unchanged.

"You're all here," the man listlessly said.

"Hey, how did this happen?" Brother Assist asked.

"D*mm*t, I met an utterly shameless cad!" the man spat.

"What happened?" Brother Assist asked.

"A man came running straight to me while being chased by a NPC guard and shouted something about a mission. I couldn't understand what he meant, so I naturally asked him what was going on the moment he reached me. It turned out that it was a 'Bounty Mission' with me as the target, I quickly found myself

unceremoniously slain by the guard chasing after him soon after,” he narrated this while half submerged in water.

The men from Young Master’s Elite could feel their hearts shuddering at this. Shouting out ‘Bounty Mission’ sounded so much like Gu Fei’s style.

“What did the man look like?” Brother Assist could feel his heart going up his throat as he asked this.

“He looks like a Mage, but I don’t remember seeing him casting a spell. It was mainly the guard’s sword that killed me before he brushed me with something from behind his back. Oh, yes. He used a sword, wearing a black mage robe, and his final attack seemed to contain lightning,” the man described.

“The Video Mage?” Brother Assist asked.

The man looked as if he had a sudden realization. “That’s right! That man looks just like that Video Mage!”

Everyone could only grimace when they heard that.

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